TWENTY THRILLING STORIES - FICTION & FACT

March

15 Cents

Adventure

THE RIDGWAY COMPANY NEW YORK
PUBLISHERS OF EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE

WENTY THRILLING STORIES-FICTION & FAC

March

15 Cents

Adventure

"He told them that he was the incarnated spirit of Prester John"

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THE RIDGWAY COMPANY, NEW YORK

"Bet Your Last Dollar

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Read the announcement on page 2 of this number. The story will appear in the big April Number of

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Vol. 1 No. 5

ADVENTURE

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ADVENTURE *for* APRIL

THE Master Adventurers of the World Are Telling us their Tales

Next month **George Graham Rice** begins his own account of his career of

ADVENTURE IN POPULAR FINANCE.

Just ten years ago a young New Yorker found himself on Broadway with only $7.30 to his name. With this for capital he made and lost $1,500,000 in less than two years, selling tips on horse-races.

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Then he turned his attention to gold mines. Since that time he has raised, directly and indirectly, $200,000,000 for Goldfield, Tonopah, Rawhide and other Nevada mining-stocks, by schemes of publicity and promotion, the inside workings of which the wise and sophisticated no more dream of than do the innocent and unwary.

By the adoption of his suggestions, the brokerage house of B. H. Scheftels & Company sold and delivered to the American public, 15,000,000 shares of mining-stocks in nineteen months. His activities were interrupted on September 29, 1910, by the United States Government, by a sensational raid of the offices of this firm in seven cities.

George Graham Rice was the originator of new systems of reaching the public—the thinking public. He knows the methods in use by high financiers and low financiers to separate the investing public from their money. In the April ***ADVENTURE*** he begins to tell his whole story, frankly, boldly, without concealment, from the day of **Maxim & Gay** to the day of the raid.

Hundreds of thousands of Americans have taken chances in horse-races, mining-stocks and various other schemes in which they calculated to "get rich quick." Mr. Rice will tell them how they lost their money, where it went, and

what the real "Get-Rich-Quick" forces are.

"Looking for Trouble," by Captain George B. Boynton, is the life-story of another Master Adventurer that is winning high favor in our pages. Blockade-runner, privateer, revolutionist, smuggler, buccaneer, pirate and treasure-seeker, he has further stories to tell that are as startling in the world of wild life as are Mr. Rice's in the world of finance.

"Sir John Hawkwood: a Tale of the White Company in Italy," by Marian Polk Angellotti of California, is the alluring name of a new serial beginning in April.

With twenty stories and articles, you may expect great things next month.

ADVENTURE *for* APRIL

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ADVENTURE
Vol. 1 March No. 5
1911

God's Ways in Keewatin

by Comingsby William Dawson

THE WHO travels the Appian Way, especially if it be toward sunset, may well be subdued by the sober thought of the antiquity of Man; yet he who journeys along the high-road waterways of the Farther North is made older by a vaster memory—the antiquity of God. In these silent lands, from the Creation the solemn cycles of the seasons have revolved harsh and unhindered. In Summer there have been the night-long suns and the burning heat; in Winter the icy cold and day-long darkness. These things nothing has mitigated, nothing has prevented, since time was.

Footprints which Winter has left recorded, of such stray stragglers from the world without as have dared to penetrate hither, are soon blotted out by the tropic luxuriance of July. Those which Summer has mercifully spared are quickly erased by the first snowfall. Nowhere is Man more finite; nowhere is Earth more infinite. Over each and all, like a voice of terror, broods the silence.

If my companions had been aware of these primal influences, they had not made it known in speech. In the five days of our traveling together there had been scarcely a word exchanged, save when Sterne, my host, head-trapper from a down-river Fort, had given orders to the Indians, to which they had grunted in reply.

Camp and paddle, paddle and camp, with

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an occasional portage—so had the days gone by, until with the fading light of the fifth evening we found ourselves within seven miles of our destination.

Towards noon we had swum out on a great lake studded with reedy islands; through these we were still threading a passage, when my ears were startled by the scraping of a distant violin.

I paused, with blade poised, glancing into the faces of my fellow-travelers for any sign of surprise. There was none. Bending above their industrious paddles they wore the same unastonished expression which they had always worn, and bid fair to carry to the grave the countenances of men who have looked into the eyes of the Inscrutable, and, having gazed, have ceased to question.

On we came, drawing near to an island of tangled growth, apparently deserted. Rounding a miniature headland, I saw a little weedy cove with a boat drawn up on the shore. Hiding in the background umbrage was a low-built trader's store, of which the window and door stood wide, whence streamed a solitary light, barred by the sprawling grotesque shadow of the musician inside. As I watched, suddenly the light was extinguished.

Our Indians at once, and as one man, desisted from their labor, and fell to crossing themselves and muttering native translations of Romish prayers, fumbling beneath their shirts at the silver crucifixes which they carried.

Our canoe, borne on by its recent speed, rippled in toward the shore till its prow, becoming caught in some floating flowers, swung round and brought us to a halt.

Far away in the lakeside woodland the sun hung tangled in the leafage, like Absalom of old by his golden hair. The indigo dusk, which in these parts during the Summer months usurps the functions of night, stole from out the tree-boles and streamed across the quiet waters. The moon swam up and the stars shone. No bird was heard to cry. Only one sound perturbed the silence—the plaintive, amateurishly rendered airs of the violin.

"Mary, Mary, Jesu, Jesu!" babbled the constant repetition from the trembling lips of our voyageurs. With the exception of these familiar words, all their prayers were so much jargon to me, though doubtless sufficiently intelligible to the all-creating God.

Sterne lay back upon a sack of flour and kindled his pipe—glad of a respite from toil. Although he had not owned it, he, like myself, was deadly tired. He beckoned to me to join him, and was pleased to utter the first word of that dumb day.

"He's rather shy this evening! Put his light out as soon as he saw us. That's on account of you. He knows you're a stranger."

"Who knows I'm a stranger?" I asked.

"Why, he does. Showater, I mean. Ah, but I forgot—you're new to these parts, and don't know who *he* is."

Sterne relapsed into silence. As he did so, the musician, whoever he might be, ceased from his playing.

The store stood some hundred yards away, but in that still air we could hear through the open door the violinist resining his bow. Then the performance reopened with a selection from the Scottish ballads —"The Flowers o' the Forest," "The Auld Hoose," and "The Bonnie Hoose o' Airlie" —tunes which awakened memories altogether too fond for Keewatin.

"He's always doing that," growled Sterne. "Seems to recognize the company he's entertaining."

"Why shouldn't he? We're not so far away but what he can see us," said I, anxious lest the conversation should drop.

"Ah, that's where the story comes in," replied my companion. "Since you're always asking for yarns, here's one that's worth the telling. I can vouch for the truth of the particulars, for what I haven't seen with my own eyes I've had straight from Père Pierre, the Jesuit. I guess he's the only person as knows 'em all, unless you count in God."

Here he paused, and turning to the Indians, ordered them with an oath, if they must pray to do so more quietly. Then resumed, "This man Showater, as y' may see from the style of his house, was a private trader, and to be a private trader in the Company's waters is to be accursed. What persuaded him to come here heaven alone knows; the fact remains that he did come. Now if a feller intends to filch the Company's trade in Keewatin and to be successful, he must be crooked. There's only one way in which he can win favor with the Indians, and that's by paying for their pelts with whisky on the sly—a thing which, as you know, is forbidden. For generations the Company has

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been a mother and a father to these heathen, has done the best that it could for them, and has dealt fairly by them. Therefore we Company men hate and despise the private trader—cut him out of our calling-list as a Christian should the Devil.

"WHATEVER else Showater may have been, he was honest and straight; and, for that reason, might just as well have been in Hong Kong as here, for all the trade he got. From the day of his arrival, when he first gave out that he kept no spirits, he was deserted and his stores began to rot where he'd dumped them.

"When our people at the Fort, seven miles distant, heard o' this, they gave over hating him and simply despised him for a fool. Personally, I'd rather be hated than despised. What they asked was, where was the use of a private trader who didn't sell spirits? And the Indians asked the same.

"But Père Pierre, when he heard it, was glad and said, 'I think that I can love this man.' Next day he went off to try.

"When he came to the island, Showater was seated on the sand on an upturned box, a-playing of his violin.

"I'd have liked to have seen that meeting; it must 'ave been comic. Pierre, who you will see for yourself by and by is such a tall, broad, happy feller, and Showater was so sad and small.

"'Is it true that you refuse to sell spirits?' shouted le Père, while he still had some sixty feet of lake to cover.

"Showater lowered his bow and nodded.

"'*Le bon Dieu* be praised!' bellowed the priest, and leaping to land, upsetting his canoe, rushed up the shore to fling his arms around the little man.

"Showater, wondering what kind of Popish maniac this might be, took to his heels and ran, yelling, 'Oh, spare my violin, oh, spare my violin!' The big Jesuit followed, booming, '*Le bon Dieu!* Let me kiss you, *mon ami!*'

"When Showater had chucked away his fiddle in the grass, he suffered himself to be embraced—after which explanations followed.

"This, then, was the beginning of that great friendship which sprang up between the priest and the private trader.

"As men of honor, we Company men could have nothing to do with the temperance violinist; and the Indians wouldn't, seeing as how he sold no liquor. Except for le Père, he was isolated.

"How lonely a man can become in Keewatin God alone knows; but I guess Showater came near finding out. His one comfort was his instrument, which he was forever playing.

"Many's the day and night, when I've been passing over the ice with my dog-team, that I've stopped to listen, as we are stopping now. His was the mournfulest playing that I ever hope to hear; he seemed to feel when he was being listened to, and instinctively to adapt his tunes to his man. Whether it was that he was trying to draw us to him with his music or only speaking to us that way because we wouldn't let him meet us face to face, I don't know.

"But I will say this, that it's often I've wept out here in the darkness because of thoughts of home and the Old Land that his tunes have brought back. Hark at him now with his 'Kathleen Mavourneen,' —— —— him!"

THE water sighed about our canoe; the Indians pattered at their prayers. From the window, where the shadow of the lonely trader fell, the music drifted toward us; by my side I heard the white man snivel, and felt him shaken with sobs.

"Well," I murmured after an interval, "and what else?"

"Where's the good of talking while that devil squeaks and scrapes? He makes a man a baby. D'you mean to tell me that y' don't see what I'm driving at?"

I shook my head.

"Heavens! You're dense," he groaned.

"Why, you've told me nothing," I cried, raising my voice an octave, angered by his rudeness. "You've not told me who the man is, or where he comes from, or why he came."

"Hush!" whispered Sterne, speaking softly. "Who he is, indeed! There's a question to be asking! Only God can answer you that. But I can tell you who he was—I got it from Pierre. Showater, by his own telling, was from first to last a fool. That don't convey much? All right then, I'll explain. He was an only son and all that. His parents expected great things of him, instead o' which he got into a mix-up with some girl—a real love-affair—and then married her, without their knowledge.

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"His father was angry and turned him out, neck and crop. Showater was a born incompetent, only he didn't know it—a very decent decoration, but hardly a useful article. He tried to make a living, and, o' course he failed—failed so badly that, like the young man in the Bible, he began to be in want. His girl-wife chose this favorable opportunity for presenting him with a baby. Heaven alone knows what such people want with children! By all accounts they were fools enough to be glad of it. He'd begun to despair of ever doing anything, but this set him on to try again.

"No one required him; he was quite useless. At last he sank so low that he began to think that he had only one accomplishment—the playing o' his violin. There he was a bigger fool than ever. Hark to him now, scraping away. It's good enough for drawing-rooms and Keewatin; but it's no blamed good to make money by."

I listened, and was sorry to have to agree with Sterne. It was certainly not good enough to make a living by. Showater's handling of his instrument was distinctive in so far as it was pathetic; but then who couldn't be pathetic under his circumstances, shoved out of civilization, with no one to talk to, engaged in playing, "Home Sweet Home"?

"SO FAR as I know his story," continued Sterne, "his wife grew permanently ill on account o' the privations which she had to endure, and his child wasn't overstrong. It happened that, when he was at his lowest ebb, he met by accident an old college chum. This friend o' his belonged to a firm named Garnier, Parwin & Wrath, which was at that time trying to cut out the Company by placing private trading-posts throughout our territory. He took pity on Showater and gave him a job, sending him up to start this store. Fancy sending a kid-gloved innocent like Showater all the way across the ocean, up here into the North to do such work as that. No wonder their business went to smash!

"This place needed a strong and unscrupulous man. That man wasn't Showater. He was too honest to sell whisky. I'd sell anything if I knew that I'd left a wife and child across the sea who were starving. Anyhow, that's how he happened to get stranded, robbed of his wife and child, with no means o' getting back to them. For all the chance that they had o' seeing one another he might have been in heaven and they might have been in hell—only, by all accounts, they were all in the latter place.

"His wife seems to have grown cross and wretched, and his child feebler and feebler, till at last it died—after which its mother wrote and blamed him.

"He'd got no one to tell his troubles to, except the priest. He was so crushed by this time that he believed whatever his wife told him, and took the blame to himself; which wasn't fair.

"When he got to thinking things over and was extra specially lonely, he was often tempted to sell spirits and go in for illicit trading so as to gather the money to get home—only le Père was always turning up to dissuade him. When he heard him playing more vigorously than usual, we used to say that it was 'cause he was tempted, and was doing his best to drive the Devil away.

"Four years ago he did the last bit o' foolery that ruined him. Down at the Fort the Factor, a man named Birrel, had married a squaw, and had had a child by her. Then he got ashamed o' what he'd done, and disowned 'em both. The woman went away with an Indian, leaving the child behind, which wasn't a very happy state of affairs for any one concerned. We nicknamed the child 'The Lost Chord,' 'cause nobody owned her. What must Showater do when he heard o' this, but take up with the child and adopt her! This was just after he'd heard o' the death of his own girl, when his heart was sore. It was said that he'd come to believe that she was the soul of his own dead child come back to comfort him. He was a tender-hearted chap. I don't criticize him on that score. A man who lives by himself may come to believe almost anything.

"FOR one Summer the Lost Chord stayed with him; but, when the Winter came round, they began to lack food. Le Père had gone on his round and at first Showater was too proud to tell anybody. It was not until he saw that the girl-child was dying of starvation that his pride gave way. One night, when they had been without food for three days, he could stand it no longer. He'd seen the Lost Chord getting weaker and weaker, and at last set out to the Fort to bring help. It took him a long time getting there, for he was famished

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and hadn't any huskies—had to travel on snowshoes, in the use of which he was no expert. When he reached the Fort, every one was abed and the place was in darkness.

"I happened to be stopping there that night, sleeping in a room on a side o' the square which forms an angle with that occupied by Birrel. When the dogs began to bark I looked out, so that I saw and heard all.

"'Factor Birrel, Factor Birrel!' cried Showater, as he flung a chunk of snow against the window-pane. 'Wake up, wake up! your child is dying!'

"There was no reply. Birrel must have heard and recognized the voice; but he was always a hard and brutal man, and, I suppose, saw a grim humor in the situation—that another man, a rival and despised fool at that—should travel to him at dead o' night to give him news of his own child's dying. Perhaps he thought it a put-up job on Showater's part, a strategy to get companionship and food. Whatever he fancied, he made no answer. At last Showater lost all patience. Gentle feller as he was, he took to heaving lumps o' ice and shattering the window-panes.

"That brought the Factor to his feet. Coming to the window at an awkward moment, he looked out, so that his forehead was gashed with a lump of ice, slit open, and began to bleed. It didn't improve his temper.

"'What the —— do you want?' he shouted. 'Yer filthy little pirate swine!'

"'Oh, Mr. Birrel, the Lost Chord's dying! We haven't any food. For God's sake, save her!'

"'No child o' mine!' answered the Factor. 'More likely one of your own. Let her die!'

"Birrel knew quite well that this was a lie—so did we all.

"'Oh, sir,' cried Showater, his teeth yam-yammering with the cold, 'she is your child, bone of your bone, blood of your blood—and she's dying!'

"'And, by ——, if you don't get out o' this at once, I'll set the dogs on you and you'll die, too!'

"'Do what you like with me—I don't count anyway; but oh, Mr. Birrel, spare her life!' And the little chap was crying as he said it.

"'The brat of an Indian!' hissed the Factor. Then he drew back from the window; but the next minute reappeared with a gun. 'Look here,' he shouted, 'if y' don't get out o' this, I'll shoot you where y' stand!' And he began to flick the frost off Showater, grazing him here and there with his bullets, and fetching blood.

"'Shoot away, you cruel devil!' screamed the man outside. 'Shoot away! We'll see what God has to say some day to you and your frozen heart!'

"'And so we will!' replied the Factor. 'And to you and my woman's child!'

"It was a bad sight to see; but a Factor's absolute in his own Fort as an Eastern Rajah. It was no good interfering.

"By and by Birrel got tired of his sport. 'Here you,' he shouted, 'if the Lost Chord was dying when you left her, you'd better get back to your kennel before she's gone. What would God say to a father who ran off and left his dying child? Moreover, if you don't go now I'll loose the dogs on you. I'm sick o' your pasty face!'

"I suppose the thought that the Lost Chord might be dying and him absent, had its effect, for Showater staggered away into the night. I heard the Factor laugh. Then all was quiet again.

"WOUNDED and spent, Showater stumbled his passage back across the lake, hurrying all he could—which wasn't much—till he came to the island. It was what we call day in these parts when he arrived, though there wasn't any change o' light worth mentioning.

"On entering the store, he found that the Lost Chord was lost to him forever—that she was dead. It was then, as he afterward told le Père, as he stood looking at her pinched face and wasted hands and baby body, over which the skin was drawn so tight, that he solemnly knelt to God and prayed that hell-fire might begin for Birrel in this life; that he might live long and die painfully, when he was old, of a slow disease. And after this, he willed that he himself might die.

"The night on which all this happened, as le Père was journeying through a wood a hundred miles away, he heard the voice of an Indian woman wailing and bidding him turn homeward. He was at that time making haste to give the last sacrament to a dying man thirty miles distant; so at first he did not obey.

"But the voice kept him company in the thicket crying, 'Père Pierre, Père Pierre, in

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the name of the living God, turn homeward, Père Pierre!'

"Then he left his huskies and went in search of the woman; but he could not see her, nor could he find her trail. Yet the voice kept calling to him, always the same space away, 'Père Pierre, make haste, turn homeward! In the name of the living God, Père Pierre!'

"Then said le Père, 'It shall be with me as it was with Balaam. If my dogs turn homeward, I will follow. God shall speak to me through the dumb beasts which He has made.'

"When he came to the place where he had left his dogs, the sled was already turned upon the backward trail, and he could no longer hear the voice. So he followed.

"In one sleep he made the journey; but, when he came to the Fort, although the dogs were very weary, they passed it by and did not halt till they had reached the island.

HE DRAGGED himself, footsore and fagged, up the beach to the trader's store, wondering, what new working of destiny awaited him there. He knocked, and receiving no answer, forced the latch and entered. In the gloom, stretched out at full length in a corner of the room, he saw a man's figure. Going nearer he struck a match, and, bending lower, held it to the face so that he recognized Showater. He was lying on his back with closed eyes, the girl-child was on his breast, his left arm thrown about her, his right flung apart with the fist clenched.

"Before he could tell whether they were dead or alive the match went out. Striking another and stooping nearer, he waited so long listening for the breath that the match burnt his fingers and fell, still glowing, on the upturned face. In the dark he heard a slight commotion, and next time he looked Showater had opened his eyes.

"'She is dead, quite dead,' he said faintly. 'Why could you not let me die with her? Oh, let me die!'

"Le Père now knew what the voice in the forest had meant, and set to work to reclaim this life. Having lighted a fire, and put on some snow to melt and boil, he brought in provisions from his sled, and, having prepared a meal, compelled Showater to swallow. At first he refused and then, when in his famished condition he could not longer resist the smell of food, he looked despairingly at the priest and cried, 'A curse on you, Pierre, that you should bring upon me this new shame! This should have been the one worthy act of my life. You have taken it from me!'

"The disgusting way in which he tore at his meat told the priest its own tale, and later, when he had recovered somewhat, Showater told what was left to tell.

"'You have robbed me in your love of me of my one nobility,' he cried, 'yet you have only postponed the day, for I have willed to die.'

"In this North country, you must understand, where men can't always get at poisons, long before the coming of the white man the Indians had solved the problem of how to make a cleanly and inexpensive suicide in a very simple way—one which is still in practise among them. They just lie down, as though they were already dead, and *will* that they may no longer live.

"In the cases which have come under my notice this method has proved most efficacious. Moreover, it is all so naturally done that it leaves one wondering who is to blame—the suicide or his Maker. Le Père set to work to try and prove to Showater that, if he persisted, he would undoubtedly be lost; to which Showater replied that, since he had been already damned in this life, he couldn't be much worse in the world to come, and was willing to take his chances there.

"'Everything that I have ever handled in this world I have spoiled!' he cried. 'I killed the child I was fool enough to beget. My wife is probably dying in some London slum. Here am I, stranded and useless, as I have always been, shipwrecked in the ends of the earth, with no hope of escape; hated and despised even here—I, who have always loved and craved to be loved! This child lies dead because I loved her. I have been damned in this life in the deepest hell. You can never threaten me with a worse one in the world to come! There may be no world to come—only a long unbroken sleep.'

"Le Père was wise, and saw that this was no time for arguing; so, leaving provisions, he set out for the Fort.

"BIRREL had always been an unbeliever, and scoffer at le Père. He had seen the priest pass up-lake earlier in the day, on his way to the island; I think he guessed his destination. Anyway, he had become manifestly afraid.

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Every half-hour he kept going to the gates to gaze out into the twilight, swearing to himself, shivering as with ague, and always keeping some of us by him. The last time, he saw the Jesuit, advancing over the ice.

"Then he nibbled his finger-nails, and ordered the gates to be closed and barred. Some snow had drifted up so that at first, when the Indian in charge threw his weight against the doors they refused to shut. Birrel leaped on him like a wild beast, I remember, and struck him with both fists above the eyes, so that he crept away blinded and whimpering. Then he closed the doors himself. We, who had watched, fancied that he must have been drinking or gone suddenly mad. But it wasn't that.

"Presently, as we stood and listened, we heard the pattering of huskies, and the rasping of a sled across the snow.

"'Factor Birrel, open your door!' roared the voice of the priest. 'I come to you with news of your murdered child.'

"Birrel crouched behind us and cowered against the wall.

"'Don't open it,' he whispered; 'don't let him in!'

"I'd had enough of this sickening game of watching a bully at his play; so I started to draw the bolts. Birrel tried to spring upon me and to do the same for me as he'd done for the Indian; but I struck him off, and slashed his cheek in the doing of it.

"'Curse you, keep it shut! For the love of God, keep it shut!' he screamed.

"The face of the Jesuit peered in. 'And who are you to curse or to speak God's name?' he asked. 'You, who have murdered your child!'

"'She is not my child!' he groaned, repeating his lie.

"For a while the Jesuit was silent, and gazed on him sadly, almost as though he pitied him. Then, striding slowly nearer, while Birrel hid his eyes: 'Bone of your bone and blood of your blood!' he said.

"Dipping his finger in the gash which my blow had made across his face, the priest smeared his forehead, and solemnly said, 'May the Lord God make thee a curse and an oath among thy people! May the Lord God make this blood that causeth thy curse to enter into thy bowels, so that it make thy body to swell and thy thigh to fall away! Amen and amen!'

"Then, as he turned sorrowfully to go, 'It had been better for thee that a millstone had been hanged about thy neck, and that thou hadst been cast into the depth of the lake, rather than that thou shouldst have offended against one of these My little ones!'

"Birrel had had enough cursing that day to take the gilt off o' most men's chances of a happy immortality; and the curious thing is, that it has all come true.

"Our Indians are Catholics, and they won't lay so much as a finger upon him; so his name, y'see, has become an oath amongst his people. Ever since that day he's been unable to speak a word. Maybe it's paralysis of the tongue; maybe it isn't. The fact remains that he has to point for whatever he wants, and to write his orders down. What's more, he can't walk. His legs have withered away, and trail behind him when he's carried, like lumps o' lead. As a consequence, he gets no exercise. He who was one o' the sturdiest men in Keewatin is getting as puffy about the body as a pig. Perhaps it don't much matter being cursed in civilization; but I'd be mighty sorry to be cursed twice over so downrightedly, so long as I've got to live up here."

STERNE ceased from his narration. While we waited, I heard the sounds of the violin again, and saw a shadow stirring behind the window of the trader's store.

"Showater seems to have come off all right," I said; "he seems lively."

"Yes, that thing's lively enough," replied Sterne turning slowly towards me. "But the question is, Is that Showater?"

"Thought you told me it was," I answered.

"H'm! You must have thought wrong. Showater's dead—been dead these three years."

"Then what is that?" I asked.

"That's what I'd like to know," replied Sterne with a throaty laugh, which betrayed his nervousness. "It's kind o' uncanny to discuss a poor dead gentleman so near to the scene of his earthly habitation. Seems like talking scandal about a newly-dead man, while you're sitting on his grave. Anyway, since I've told you so much o' the story, I may as well finish it before le Père arrives. He always comes about this hour.

"For the next four months, after they'd done with their cursing, Showater and the priest lived together. I think le Père did this out of fear for Showater's sake; because

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he'd said that he had willed to die. Or he may have distrusted Birrel and wished to guard his friend against the Factor.

"As far as Birrel was concerned, the fear was all on his side. Whenever he had to pass by the island on business, he'd make a wide circuit on purpose, and shake like a man with palsy at the sound o' the violin.

"Once, 'tis said, he actually set out at dead of night to go to the trader's store that he might beg his forgiveness, and ask him to pray to God that the curse might be removed. On the way, one of his Indians began to tell about the place, and how Showater had caused the Lost Chord to be buried beneath the threshold of his shack, so that over her body any one would have to pass who would have speech with him. Then the Factor turned back, for he had already heard the strains o' the violin and it seemed to him like his baby's voice, crying out to God against him. 'Twas then he realized that it was not against the anger of a live man that he'd got to plead, but against the troubled soul of his own dead child.

"Seems strange to think that so gentle a man as Showater should have been made terrible by the ghost of a little child. Still more strange that he, who had failed in everything, should have succeeded at last only through a dead child's hate; and that his violin-playing, which had been his most absurd conceit, should have proved so powerful when he'd nigh lost everything.

"Birrel's one hope was that he had heard that Showater had willed to die. All through the Spring and early Summer reports kept coming in as to how the trader was fast sinking, in spite of the priest's warning that God could never forgive a suicide. Birrel rejoiced. He made sure that, if he could once outlive the evil-eye—Showater—he would again be well. He miscalculated there, d'you see; he'd forgotten the conditions o' the trader's prayer: 'That hell-fire might begin for him in this life, and that he should live long and die painfully, when he was old, of a slow disease.'

"When the news came that Showater was dead, it acted on him like the blessed words on the sick man at Capernaum. That very hour he jumped up and began to walk. The first use he made of his tongue was in swearing that he'd hound the life out of the priest. He made inquiries as to his whereabouts, and, on finding that he was still at the island, paddled off to have words with him.

"As he came in sight o' the store, he saw another canoe; it was putting off from shore and in it sat Pierre.

"'It's a funny kind of God that you Jesuits worship!' he shouted; 'a God who makes me well as soon as the devil gets your dead friend!'

"The priest answered nothing, but drew level and passed by. He was carrying Showater's body to the Catholic graveyard for burial. Birrel saw that it was Showater, for the face was bare and staring his way. He was getting ready to blaspheme again, when he heard the wailing sound of a violin and stopped midway. It came from the window of the deserted store, and it was Showater's playing--and Showater was dead.

"Birrel's face turned a slaty gray. He clutched at something in the air and missed it, and tottered and tumbled backwards, half upsetting the canoe. At the first sound o' the bow upon the strings his old infirmities came back upon him. Since that day his speech has gone from him; his thighs have shrunk and fallen away, so that everything has happened according to the curse. Hell-fire has begun for him in this life, and he bids fair to live long and die painfully."

I CAUGHT the sound of an approaching paddle-beat, and the swirl of traversed waters.

"It is le Père," whispered Sterne in answer to my questioning glance; "he comes every night about this hour."

"What for?" I asked.

"What for? Well, it's hard to say. Some think to sprinkle holy water, because he's sorry for the curse and goes to pray that it may cease. And some, because he's glad of the curse, and prays it may succeed."

"And what of Showater? Why doesn't God let him rest?"

"Because Showater doesn't want to, I should say. Y'see, he was a failure in everything but in his cursing; and to watch the thing working out all right must be for him a kind o' heavenly reward. Seems as though he'd missed his vocation in this life, and only found it at the last—when it was almost too late. He should have been a professional curser. Now he's so proud of his one achievement that he comes back from the dead to boast about it—or, perhaps, as the Indians believe, *to try it on again.* That's why they pray."

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The MAD MENU

by Leon Rutledge Whipple

THERE was a mixed foursome finishing the rags and tatters of Faculty gossip at the Sunday evening *salon* of the wife of the Professor of Botany. Katherine Blair, of the Girls' Gymnasium, was explaining her hobby, European Folk Dances, to Rivers, Dean of Agriculture, and young Dr. Girard, House Surgeon at the Hospital, when the Instructor in Domestic Economy gave a sudden and electrifying shriek (she was quite young and pretty and attractive enough to shriek very successfully)——

"Oh—*oh!* you wretch! you villain! The pies your mother made were murder in the first degree!"

She sprang to her feet with a section of the Sunday paper from the Big City in her hand, and full of bright blonde anger. "Listen, oh, mortal men and women, listen! This slanderer wants to close the Domestic Science Department because it's ruining the State's constitution—its alimentary one!" She began to read breathlessly:

WANTS PIES LIKE MOTHER USED TO MAKE

. . .

SENATOR GIBBS OPPOSES UNIVERSITY APPROPRIATION BILL BECAUSE NEW-FANGLED COOKERY WRECKS FARMERS' DIGESTIONS

. . . . .

"FEEDING FATHER FROTHY AND FRIVOLOUSLY FLAVORED FOOD IS FATAL"

. . . . .

AUTHOR OF FAMOUS "NUDE STATUE BILL" DECLARES TAXPAYERS' MONEY IS WASTED ON INJURIOUS FADS IN THE DOMESTIC SCIENCE DEPARTMENT OF OUR STATE UNIVERSITY

. . . . .

CAPITAL CITY, March 10. "We must not support for the destruction of an innocent people that death-dealing institution, a cooking-school, in the very cradle of the next generation," declared Senator Jonathan Gibbs, of Clay Co., author of the famous "Nude Statue Bill," in an impassioned appeal in favor of reducing the University appropriation from $600,000 to $450,000 before the Upper House to-day. "Our daughters shall not be taught to murder—ay, to murder—their parents with food that is poison masquerading under indecent French names. Who knows what effect *omelette soufflé, pommes de terre en beurre,* and *rosbif au jus* (I quote from programs issued by the Department) will have on the bone and sinew of our great and glorious State?

"My friends on the other side have introduced bills against patent medicines, but I have found that patent medicines are an agreeable stimulant during late cold Springs. But I ask them, why do they not legislate against the *need* for medicines? Do not abolish patent medicines, but abolish *patent foods!* Exterminate this frivolous fodder that is ruining constitutions made strong by the cabbage and fried potatoes and pickles and pie of our forefathers!

"Pie—I utter the very word in awe, with tears in my eyes. I want the pie that mother used to

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make, the pie that is the cornerstone of our commonwealth, the pie that made us great. I would that I could find words to paint a memorial to the pies of my boyhood—those pies compounded of all the fragrant spices whose delicious aromas scent the sunny fields of India and Madagascar, rich with the mellow apple and the succulent punkin that waxed fat like tinted globes of sugary nectar under the caressing rays of the glorious orb of day through the long flower-strewn months of Summer, absorbing the flavors of every blossom-scented breeze and painted like a maiden's blushing cheek by the west wind and the dew and the silvery beams of the harvest moon. O Pie! how many have fallen victims of your charms!

"Shall this edible jewel, this delicate viand, fit food for the gods, be replaced by the fancy froth of those who would teach us to 'Cook with Gas'? No, a thousand times NO! If we eat Domestic Science, we either starve or die.

"The University is extravagant: it doesn't need this money. It sends our daughters home to us with rats in their hair and notions in their heads. They are too good to work. They want washing-machines and doilies. Too much book-learning is an abomination in the sight of the Lord. I believe in keeping women in their place, along with their noble mothers and grandmothers and great-grandmothers. I appeal to you to cut down this allowance, and, paraphrasing a wonderful statesman, who was far greater than my humble self, I cry, 'Give me pie, or give me death!'"

Miss Anne Carter Page finished and then, in as near a bass voice as she could achieve, she stretched out her hand to the pale bust of Humboldt on the Botany Professor's bookcase.

"Gentlemen," she rumbled, "you shall not cut your hairy throats with your own knives; you shall not cake your insides with fat; you shall not parboil your wives when fireless cookers can be made for twenty-five cents. No, a thousand times NO! not even if I have to tell you that *omelette soufflé* is eggs blown up with a bicycle pump, and *rosbif* the indecent Frenchman's idea of English. I have spent years giving your daughters the notion that a meal does not consist of grease seasoned with food, and you shall not put those daughters in the same place you have put their mothers and their grandmothers and all the noble greats in—I refer, of course, to the grave. And you needn't erect a memorial to the victims of your boyhood pies. Tombstones are attending to that. Paraphrasing the words of a great statesman with a head the size of a pin, I cry,

"'Give him pie, *and* give him death!'"

Miss Page finished amid laughter and applause from her colleagues and, rolling up the Sunday paper, she stabbed herself violently in the heart and sank melodramatically on a divan. After a moment of silent agony she sat up and cried wrathfully, "Wouldn't that—wouldn't that——"

"Jar you," suggested the Dean of Agriculture helpfully. He had been editor of a country paper, and was now head of the University lobby because of his combined knowledge of advertising and rural psychology.

"Thanks," said the Instructor of Domestic Economy, settling her skirts around her and patting an errant golden lock. "Who *is* this Gibbs person, Professor Girard?" Dr. Girard had to teach Surgery, but he hated to be called "Professor." That was why she did it—that and because he was from New England. He flushed.

"He's a farmer and an old fool who introduced the Nude Statue Act."

"Doctor—Mister—Professor Girard! how shocking! Is it a vaudeville act?"

"Well, no, don't you know—He wanted to put clothes on statues—that is, he didn't want them without clothes—at least, some clothes——"

"He means," put in the Dean, who was a kindly man, although a lobbyist, "that old Gibbs introduced a bill providing that all marble, bronze, wood and plaster statues in the State be required to have a minimum of three-eighths of their area composed of drapery."

"Did they *pass* it?"

"No. He forgot to say what kind of statues, and when the papers began asking whether the lions on the State House portico had to put on pants, he quit. But, speaking of drapery, young lady, do you know you'll have to wear last year's clothes if things keep up this way down at Cap. City? Our House majority is solid; but Gibbs and a half-dozen of those backwoods Senators have combined with the City gang to cut our money. The gang wants that $150,000. Our only hope is to change those farmer votes when the Legislature comes up Friday. You've got to give them the time of their lives."

"Give him the time of his life!" hissed the Instructor in D. S. "I'd like to poison him with a chocolate éclair!"

"Or feed him fungi for mushrooms," mildly added Girard.

This remark must have seemed full of pith to Anne Page, for she sank into a brown study while the others chatted over

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the plans for entertaining the Legislature. And at two o'clock that morning Katherine Blair awoke to find her still at her desk in their common study in Bond Hall, deep in the pages of a "Chemistry of Foods."

THE next morning she met the Dean of Agriculture, frowning after a consultation with the President. She grasped him by a buttonhole and drew him stealthily into a corner.

"Is patriotism ever rewarded, Dean Rivers?"

"Sometimes, if it has a good press-agent."

"Well, I've got a bad case of patriotism. I don't want the Domestic Science Department abolished, and I *do* want six months' leave to study in the South for my thesis, 'The History and Methods of Southern Cooking.'" Her voice sank to a whisper: "If the appropriation passed without a cut; Illouwa would be grateful, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, I think the Board *might* feel——"

"If seven votes were changed——"

"It's almost certain if——"

"Oh, I am *so* glad!" she cried, with a sudden ridiculous assumption of a youthful co-ed's flutter. "My table at the dinner Friday will seat just twelve. Will you *please* see that I get *interesting* people, prominent Senators and——"

She screwed her face into an absurd imitation of a politician's wink, and swaggered, man-wise, down the hall. Then she turned and called back, joyously, "I'm going to have six new gowns made—you need them to study with—in the South."

The Dean grinned and wondered.

ON FRIDAY, March 10, a dull close day, when the Legislators arrived, they were not greeted by a blonde vision with a fascinating smile. Anne Page, like other great captains, led from the rear. All morning she and her graduate students had cooked in the laboratory (an unexplained item of $23, labeled "Breakage," appeared in her expenses that month), but at three o'clock, she left the field to seek her "beauty sleep"—a political trick inherited from three grandmothers who had helped rule the South.

Meanwhile the University took on the aspect of a county fair. The Student Band blared a way round the campus for a brief trip. Certain city Representatives were being persuaded of the needs for education over a game of pool at the Elks' Club. The Speaker of the House and his friends were temporarily convinced by the Head of Romance Languages with high horse-power juleps and assorted French jokes. The Dean of Agriculture led serious farmers around the Experiment Farm, giving them pointers worth money, and showed them Esmeralda III., a beautifully manicured Jersey lady, who ate sixty cents' worth of choice greens every day and produced a bushel or so of butter in exchange. This dumfounded the visitors, but made their votes certain.

Yet Gibbs and his six adamantine opposers stayed "sot" despite the assaults of the President, two Deans, and the pretty wife of the History adjunct. They sneered at everything, and made the little History wife from New Hampshire cry with remarks about "teachin' a darn Yankee hist'ry to boys whose fathers fit for slavery." And the Faculty were in despair when, at the President's reception, they solidified in a chill, suspicious group like an iceberg on the social sea.

Through all this, Miss Anne Carter Page was curled up on a rug before the fire in a pink kimono, smiling in her sleep. And Niagaras of lace and delicate linen foamed on the bed, and a pink dream hung eagerly on a chair.

But it was a very wide-awake vision in pink splendor that greeted Senator Jonathan Gibbs and eleven other resolute watchdogs of the Treasury that evening, in a bower of greenery (not for nothing had she tempted the head horticulturist with slips from her mother's English roses) in Academic Hall. She had just lighted the rose-shaded candles on a round table, glittering with silver and cut-glass for twelve, and veiled from the other diners by a curtain of palms and ferns. The Dean of Agriculture murmured, "Miss Page, of our Domestic Science Department," and fled.

There was a rush and a kind of rosy cloud seemed to settle round the twelve.

"Oh, dear Senator Gibbs, I have heard of you so much, and your speeches are wonderful! And I was so interested in your Statue Bill!" Which was all true, for hadn't she filled in the tiny yoke of her dress this very day out of respect for that statesman's delicate sentiments?

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"Be you the teacher of Domestic Sciyence?"

"Yes, I *am* that murderous creature. Do you gentlemen dare risk eating at my table?"

And she smiled upon them all, bravely gathering twelve suspicious glances into her own like the Austrian spears in the breast of Gessler. Three youthful Senators drowned in the gray oceans of her eyes, and a hatchet-faced chieftain, "Rat" Kelly, from the Big City nudged his lieutenant, Chris Schwatzfeld: "Some peacherino, unh? Let's be rah-rah boys and go back to school."

But the great Gibbs is of sterner stuff. "Do we have to eat what you cook?"

"No, of course not! You're just to inspect it. I want to prove it isn't necessarily fatal. We couldn't risk the life of the future Speaker, could we?" The Instructor of Domestic Economy smothered a laugh in her handkerchief.

At the signal the recalcitrant dozen were submerged in a swirl of feminine loveliness. Six pretty girls fluttered into their midst, dressed in soft black with lacy aprons and coquettish caps, and a red rose at each waist. They charged smiling, like the hosts at Balaklava, but instead of shot and saber, they had boutonnières and twinkling eyes. "Some of my class who will help me serve," explained Miss Page, and the six, unmasking batteries of subtle flattery and bewildering girlishness, pinned on each coat a half-blown rose.

With his head in a whirl, Gibbs was pushed gently into a seat at the head of the table, adorned with finery wheedled from three rich Faculty wives. His eleven cohorts sank down with a sigh; they had tasted nothing but a railroad lunch since breakfast.

The six flushed waitresses poured sparkling water over crushed ice, and their chief paused beside Senator Gibbs to make a little speech.

"Gentlemen," she began with an entreating smile, "I know the earnestness of your convictions. I also know your chivalry and justice. I do not ask you to eat, though I hope you will, but I do ask you to join me in one toast in this fruit punch—to the University of Illouwa!"

She raised a long-stemmed glass and tasted the fragant orange liquid therein. Each of her guests politely sipped at his, then drained his glass—thirstily. Nobody ever knew what this fruit punch contained, for Anne Page compounded it herself from a secret recipe handed down from a Virginia great-uncle; and she had filled each glass in private, even to the cube of pineapple. But the Member from Clinton was heard to smack his lips audibly, and "Rat" Kelly caught himself ordering, "Waiter, bring us another of the same."

A sudden appetite awakened in the diners. If they had been hungry before, they were ravenous now. For the great-uncle always said that if you drank his fruit punch at the end of a meal, you at once sat down and began over again. When the waitresses marched in with the soup, fear of consequences had deserted even the hard pate of Gibbs himself. The soup was steaming Creole gumbo made from a recipe so complicated that Anne Page declares she had to work it out by calculus. It vanished.

The soup was hot, and the guests did not stop to admire the cucumbers in beds of crushed ice with rosebud radishes around the edge. They ate cucumbers and garnishing with business-like relish. The Senator from Washington County asked the brunette with dimples for another helping, but forgot his request when the fish arrived, delicate and savory. Here Anne Page made another little speech:

"You see, I have tried to prepare what you would get at home—a regular old country dinner. It is all produced in our own great and glorious State, and cooked in the simple style of those mistresses of the art—your mothers. This is catfish from our own river yesterday. Eat it for the sake of Illouwa's waters."

She darted giggling into the laboratory and faced Katherine Blair, who was superintending there:

"Woman, do you know what that was? It was catfish, rich, oily and robust catfish, à la Newburg to the *n*th degree. And it tastes heavenly, and hath a sequel that dieth not and a flame that is not quenched! Girls," to the graduate students who hovered over the gas-burners, "dip that tripe in batter; it's masquerading as an entrée to-night; and dish the Roman punch. And remember your lessons in Course 3B, Iced Desserts—the essential ingredient of Roman punch is *rum!* And it should never be served to ladies. For it is an historical fact that when the Romans got too much Roman

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punch they went out and made Rome howl."

SHE rushed out, after warning the cooks "not to give them coffee, it's too bracing, and to make the chocolate with *double* cream," and with her six satellites engaged the good men and true in such converse for several minutes that they attacked with renewed vigor the main course.

This was adapted to all tastes: corned beef and cabbage, roast pork and apple-sauce, and chilli con carne, the last especially provided for "Rat" Kelly *et al.* whose effete tastes had been cultivated at all-night lunch wagons. With these came hot biscuits and the vegetables: fried potatoes, fried eggplant, fried onions and—fried eggs.

During the half-hour it took for the demolition of this substantial fare, the pink gown rested in the shadow of the ferns, and bewildered Dr. Girard, who had come up as if by chance, to ask if the plot was succeeding.

Miss Page's gray eyes were filled with a growing alarm as she pointed at the diners clattering cutlery and talking noisily. "You don't think there's any danger, do you, Doctor?"

"No, I think not. I'm to take care of them, you know."

And he winked—a difficult, frosty New England wink, and his companion winked back—in Southern style.

After the salad—a delicate mixture of fruit and nuts with mayonnaise—the chocolate spurred laggard appetites. Then a ten-minute rest was allowed the guests before the dessert.

This was mince pie. "The kind mother nor anybody else ever made," its inventor confided to her companion. "It's got two kinds of meat and suet in it, five fruits, nuts, seven spices, three kinds of flavoring and two sorts of spirituous liquors. I'm going to submit the formula to the War Department—it'll make dynamite look like talcum powder. Here's a memento of this historic field. Don't forget—at the stage-door."

He glanced at the card she had so kindly left him.

It was decorated with a water-color sketch of a man milking a cow, and below were the words:

MENU

Maraschino Fruit Punch (Kentucky Style)
Chicken Gumbo, Creole Cucumbers
Catfish with Sauce
Tripe in Batter
Roman Punch
Corned Beef and Cabbage Chilli con Carne
Roast Pork with Apple-Sauce
Hot Biscuits
Fried Onions Fried Potatoes
Fried Eggplant Fried Eggs
Walnut Salad, Mayonnaise
Hot Chocolate
Mince Pie à la Maitresse d'Hôtel
Molasses Candy Brick Cheese
Peanuts
Cheroots Stogies
Lemonade

"Lemonade——" murmured Girard weakly, and in a daze he heard his fellow conspirator talking while a third of a pie smoked before each guest.

"I can't make pies like your mothers used to make. But I've got a pretty good imitation. I have used a little French, quite 'decent,' Senator Gibbs, in describing it—*à la maîtresse d'hôtel*. It means the kind the cooking teacher makes . . . that's me."

She vanished. Senator Gibbs gingerly lifted the cover of his slice. A pungent aroma greeted his nostrils; it reminded him vaguely of patent medicines he had taken in Spring. Did she *dare* put patent medicine in pie? Was this what the State paid its money for? He would propose a bill against putting patent medicines in pie. He tasted the vessel of wrath. No, it was pleasanter than medicine, almost as good as his mother made on her sixty-third birthday before she broke her leg milking. He would eat it, paying a filial tribute to the pies of the past. Others performed the same sweet service; and some ate just because the pie was heady and toothsome.

Only "Rat" Kelly dubiously pushed aside his share after a tentative analysis of its contents. As the dinner had progressed "Rat" had grown wary; he refused many courses. He was recalling the two memorable occasions on which he had got knock-out drops in his whisky and had not come to till late the next afternoon, with his roll and his watch gone.

He kicked Chris Schwatzfeld under the table and grunted: "Cut that pie out. Let the jays do the human ostrich act." "Rat" had learned young to fear the Greeks (and the Dutch and the Dagos

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and the Polacks) when they came bearing gifts. "There's somethin' phony about this picnic—hear? That chorus-lady in pink ain't steered a bunch of farmers up against this layout just f'r fun after what Gibbs said about her. She's *sore*, an' I've seen dames like that stampede a whole convention. Cucumbers and chilli and mince pie—Hell!"

But the pie was very savory and four rural members found room for another slice.

The diners sprawled back and dabbled with candy and peanuts and copious lemonade. They felt hot and dry and too solid inside. The dinner had been a success beyond the dreams of guile. Two rural members had unbuttoned their vests; one urban statesman dropped digestion tablets in another's hand, and a third held a piece of ice surreptitiously to his forehead; the member from Lincoln groaned. Even Senator Gibbs was not altogether happy. He had eaten heartily—nearly all of every course—and now Senator Gibbs was slowly turning purple.

Kelly, surveying the scene in disgust, whispered directions to the spherical Chris. "She's got these rubes glassy-eyed an' it's up to you an' me to see Willy home from school. I ain't doped it out yet, but there's somethin' doin', so you trail these mutts of ours who've et till they've got the blind staggers and I'll chaperone the jays with the riot-calls inside of them. Get 'em to the train if you got to roll 'em—they ain't another dinky on this branch till tomorrow noon. You wise?"

Chris nodded, and when the Dean of Agriculture seated the Senate on the stage of the hot and stuffy Auditorium to hear the President's plea for that extra $150,000 for "the noble uni-varsity of Illouwa," he and "Rat" Kelly waited in the shadow outside the stage-entrance. Dr. Girard joined Anne Page and Katherine Blair on the other side of the door.

Hot puffs of close air came to them from the crowded hall. They could see Senator Gibbs in the front row on the stage. He looked ripe. His face was pure purple now. He manifested no interest in the proceedings. Others seemed equally *distrait*. Clinton's immortal son was a quivering white. The Member from Lincoln had *his* eyes shut, and when the Student Band blared out after the President's peroration, he started up, clutching at his breast. The noise and heat made him dizzy. Why did a band-leader look like a spider? At a second bellow from the brasses, agony overspread his face, and rising, he walked uncertainly toward the door.

AS HE lurched into the dark vestibule, Senator Kelly stepped out of the shadow and grasped one arm. At the same moment, Dr. Girard's professional instincts asserted themselves and he seized the wandering Senator by the other arm.

"Come on, Matthews, let's get down to the train," growled Kelly.

Girard cut in politely, "Beg pardon, sir, do you feel ill?"

"Um—umph—yeh," gasped Matthews. "Ate something—disagreed with me—pie." And he leaned his throbbing head on Girard's breast.

"I understand, sir, very sorry. I'm Dr. Girard of the University Hospital . . . just across the campus. You need to lie down in a cool and quiet room till train-time—two hours yet."

Senator Kelly's face took on an ugly grin. "Say, cut it out, Professor. I'm wise to this game. He's going down to the train with me and Schwatzfeld here. Brace up, Matthews! What'll the folks down to Saltville say if they hear about this? Come on, 'r I'll tip off the reporters an' yer constitutents."

"My constitutents kin go to—to Guinny! I'm sick. I want a cool and quiet room to die in. I don't want to die on the train! Do I, Doctor?"

"No, no, we'll take care of you. Dr. Cleveland!"

A ghostly figure in white took charge of the limp legislator. "Rat" Kelly instinctively squeezed his fingers into knotty fists. Then he sized up the shoulders of a man who had once played tackle for Harvard. He drew Schwatzfeld sharply into the shadow.

Girard continued to the interne: "Take Mr. Matthews over and let him rest in a room by himself. If he goes to sleep, don't disturb him. And hurry back, Doctor; our guests are not strong—the President's speech—very trying day——"

A little member from the Big City sought the air a moment later, and, humbly obeying Kelly's vicious orders, was led to the

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train by Schwatzfeld. Then the statistics of the Professor of Economics about the increased corn yield per acre per student per dollar per year exerted a discomposing effect on two rural gentlemen, and they came out chalk white, arm in arm, with a certain loss of dignity. They were too unhappy to obey orders, and Dr. Cleveland, like a pale Valkyr maiden hovering over the field of the slain, gathered one under each spotless wing, and guided them to the white Valhalla across the campus.

Miss Anne Page wept at the sight and called herself "Brute!" Katherine Blair held her sobbing comrade close, while a dawning wisdom filled her eyes.

"Anne Page! You—you——"

"Yes, I know. I'm all that and worse. Brutus is in the infant class. I've murdered a dozen Senators to his one and I'll be hanged for regicide. Doctor, you won't let them die, will you?"

He swore sudden oaths they would be well by the next noon, and stammered at the tear-dimmed smile she gave him.

But when the noble Gibbs arose in terrible gloom, and they saw the footlights pick out his features of agonized marble, she begged, "Please, Miss Honey Blair, take me home. We've got a majority now. And I'm tired and scared and they'll all die. I've got Lucretia Borgia left at the post!"

But an hour later she had giggled herself to sleep—a process no one else in the world had the secret of. And when the whistle of the train bearing a sulphurous Kelly back to Capital City echoed over the quiet town, seven stalwart sons of the people, with ice-bags on their heads, were tossing weakly in white cots within the still walls of the University Hospital.

And that's all—except three documents that Anne Carter Page has pasted in her scrap-book along with a clipping of Gibbs's great speech and the dinner card which she always refers to as the "Mad Menu."

A telegram:

Capital City, March 11, 1910
$600,000 appropriation passed this morning. Senate vote 34 to 30. Congratulations.
C. W. Rivers.

A letter:

Office of the President
University of Illouwa

Miss Anne Carter Page,
Department of Domestic Science,
University of Illouwa.

My dear Miss Page:

I am directed by the Board of Visitors to inform you that you have been granted a six months' leave of absence (with salary) beginning April 1, 1910, to pursue your researches in Southern Cookery: and that upon your return you will receive the rank of Adjunct-professor.

The Board believes that your experiments in cooking have been of great value to this University.

Sincerely yours
Milo Murray, President

A note, accompanying a box of pink roses:

Senate Chamber, Illouwa
March 12, 1910

My dear Miss:

You and me could boss the State.
Cornelius Ratican Kelly.

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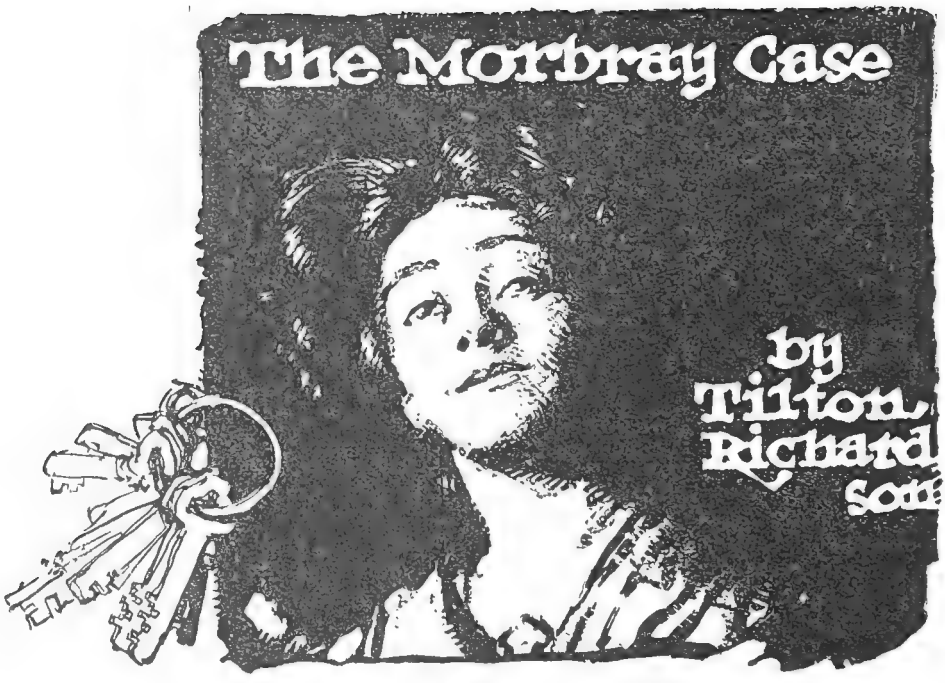

FROM the very first I told Heloise that her notion to undertake to prove Fred Morbray innocent of robbing the County National was absurd. That she, a mere girl of twenty just out of school, could hope to set aside evidence secured by the cleverest prosecuting attorney and detectives in the State was ridiculous on the face of it. My advice should have been sufficient of itself to deter her, for not only am I nine years her senior, but I was practising law when she was still wearing her hair down her back.

But Heloise Harvey always had a decisive way, and when she once made up her mind it was difficult to change it. And on the subject of Fred Morbray's innocence she was rock, and adamant rock at that. Freddy was a likable chap, and the fact that he was her cousin naturally prejudiced me in his favor, but when he was "caught with the goods," as the slang has it, there was nothing for a reasonable man to do but shake his head sorrowfully and let it go at that. If Heloise had given any legitimate reason for her belief I should have been less inclined to try to discourage her, but when I repeatedly asked her why she was so sure Fred did not take the two hundred thousand dollars in bank-notes from the vaults I could get but one answer.

"Because I know he didn't"—this, in one phrase or other, was her invariable reply. Now woman's intuition is all very well so far as it goes, but when it is absolute contradiction of facts and logic I submit that there is nothing for a sensible man to do but grit his teeth and try to make the best of it. As I was very fond of Heloise, I was naturally willing to help her all I could with my knowledge of the law and other practical things, and, although she didn't call upon me for much assistance, I nevertheless kept in close touch with the affair.

At the outset—I mean at the time that Heloise made her astounding declaration that she would fight to prove Fred innocent—the known facts were these. Some time between the tenth and the twenty-fifth of October the vaults of the County National Bank were robbed of two hundred thousand dollars in large bills placed there in two packets and sealed and initialed by Fred Morbray, the cashier. The first date was fixed by the inspection of a national bank examiner, the second by the time when the

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money was needed and the theft discovered. There had been no tampering with the locks, and the fact that the money had been replaced by two packages of tissue-paper in the same wrappers as had enclosed the bank-notes, proved that the thief had leisurely access to the vaults. The thief, therefore, was assumed to be some one connected with the bank.

The combinations of the locks were known to but two of the officers—to Nicholas Van Vleek, the president, and to Fred Morbray, the cashier. Although no one could have suspected President Van Vleek, the richest man in town, such a possibility was removed by the fact that since the middle of October, until some weeks after the discovery of the theft, he was confined to his bed by pneumonia and in care of physicians and trained nurses night and day. Besides, all possible idea of implicating Mr. Van Vleek vanished when, after Dr. Trueman permitted him to pay some attention to business, he made good the loss of the bank out of his personal fortune.

Any theory that the money might have been abstracted by some one of Morbray's subordinates in the daytime, when the vaults were open, was made void when it became known that the inner vault in which these special packages of money were kept not only had its own combination lock, but could not be opened except by the simultaneous use of two keys, one of which was kept by President Van Vleek, the other by Cashier Morbray.

During the illness of Mr. Van Vleek it had twice been necessary to open the inner vault to remove some bonds, and on both occasions the paying teller had secured the required key from Mr. Van Vleek's wife, and the vault had been unlocked by the cashier. Morbray admitted this, and furthermore damaged his own case by agreeing with the paying teller's statement that the latter had not been present when the vault was opened.

Worst feature of all, it seemed to me, was that Fred Morbray was known to have paid off a considerable mortgage on his mother's home on October twentieth, five days before the discovery of the theft, and that the payment was made in bills of large denomination. Morbray explained that he had borrowed the money from an uncle who had spent a few days in town a fortnight before, but as the uncle had sailed for a two-year cruise on his yacht to unknown ports there was no way of corroborating a statement which was regarded, to say the least, as a bit "fishy," as the saying is. It was no surprise, therefore, when Morbray asw arrested, and although I defended him there was also no surprise when he was convicted. More as a matter of form than anything else I entered an appeal and he was released on bail.

IT WAS at this point that Heloise Harvey entered the case. I shall never forget our interview after the trial. If Heloise were less pretty I should have thought her disagreeable; she was certainly angry when her five feet of neat figure flounced into my office.

"What does it all mean?" she flung at me. "You know Fred is innocent. Why did you permit him to be convicted? What were you thinking of to put in no conclusive evidence? How silly all their evidence was! Now what are you going to do?" Questions and assertions followed each other with such rapidity that I could not interject a word, and when she finally ceased for want of breath, nothing that I said appeared to carry the slightest weight with her.

Even when, calmly and dispassionately, I analyzed the case, all that I received was a wondering: "Why did you take the case if you felt that way?"

As if my feelings had anything to do with the facts! I said as much. "Facts, facts!" she broke in sharply. "That's all you lawyers think of! And all that time I sat in that stuffy court-room knowing his innocence and you never called on me to say a word!"

As patiently as I could I reasoned with her. "My dear Heloise," I said at last, "what could you say that——"

She took the words from my mouth: "What could I say? That he was innocent, of course!"

Again I reasoned. "You know nothing of the case beyond the evidence you heard. Why should you believe him innocent anyway, Heloise?"

I was sorry the instant the words passed my lips. She flashed a look at me like a—like a—well, I never was good at similes, —and shot up from her chair and began to pace the room. "How do I know? Because—because I *know!* He just *couldn't*

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steal! I know he couldn't—*he couldn't!* Fred's not that kind. He's the soul of honor. Intuition should tell you, should tell everybody that——"

There it was! Intuition! The feminine chart and compass—of as much use in a court-room as in a pilot-house!

"How long before there'll be another farce of a trial?"

I told her that if there was one it would not be for several months; the upper court never hurried about such things.

"Good!" she cried. "Long before then I'll prove Fred Morbray the victim of you law tyrants!" and she glared at me as if I were judge, jury and executioner. And that is how Heloise Harvey entered actively into the Morbray case.

I DIDN'T see her for a week and the change in her surprised me. Her eyes had a curious look in them—far-seeking is the only expression that occurs to me to describe it—and I was pained to note a little furrow extending perpendicularly from the bridge of her nose.

She was distressed, and it was so evident that I tried to distract her by levity. "Well, Heloise," I exclaimed, "have you tracked down the criminal?"

She sniffed, and I saw that I was on the wrong tack and bit my tongue, but she was apparently too much interested in what was in her own mind to trouble herself with what was in mine. She had come to me for information of a legal nature: namely, whether her questioning of some of the witnesses in the case would in any way jeopardize Fred Morbray's interests. I could not see, as his lawyer, that it would do so; on the other hand I couldn't see what possible good it would do, and I told her so.

"I've done nothing yet," she explained, without appearing to notice what I had said. "I've been thinking, and now I'm ready to act."

She gave no details, but in various ways I learned that she was very busy during the next week. Then she came to me again, and although I knew that she was on a wild-goose chase, I felt a little thrill when she said that she wanted my help.

"There are things I want to do," she announced, "for which I seem to need some sort of official indorsement. Some people appear to regard me merely as a curious girl, with no right to ask questions. What I want is your indorsement that I am—well, one of your office staff at work on the case."

Of course I had to give her what she wanted, although I feared it might put me in a position to be laughed at by my brethren of the bar, and as my law business, as usual, was not pressing I was able to give her such personal assistance as she required.

"There are certain people who might have stolen the money," she told me in a little summing up of her ideas. "That is, they were in a position where it was humanly possible. Of these there are some who wouldn't do it. There's Mr. Van Vleek, for instance; he would scarcely rob his own bank and then make good the loss unless he wanted to injure some one, and Fred was a great favorite of his, you know. Arnold, the paying teller, didn't know the combination and, anyway, Fred is positive his keys never left his possession for an instant. That disposes of all the people in the bank."

"Except Fred Morbray," I ventured, and was sorry after the look she gave me.

She wanted to inspect the bank premises, and here was where I came in. As counsel for Morbray it was only necessary for me to say to the district attorney's office that I wanted to take a look over the bank, something it had never occurred to me to think it necessary to do. With an assistant district attorney, a couple of policemen, the bank watchman and the cashier who succeeded Morbray, we prowled about the County National, but Heloise didn't take the interest I expected.

She appeared disappointed over something, and the only thing she paid much attention to was the back door of the bank building and the alleys and streets behind it. As I was taking her home she asked me where she could find a map of that section of the town and I told her at the assessor's office, where they have them for taxation purposes.

Finally the cause of her disappointment came out. "I thought surely President Van Vleek would be there," she said, as if thinking aloud.

I wondered what she wanted to see him for, and why, if she did, she didn't go and see him. Next day she spent the forenoon at the assessor's office puzzling over maps. I was as curious then as I was that night when, armed with a dark lantern that made

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me feel like a burglar, she dragged me through a street and a couple of alleys that made, as I found with some surprise, a very short cut to the back garden of the Van Vleek place. It was astonishing how quickly you could go from there to the bank and back—Heloise did it, I keeping time with my watch and the dark lantern, in less than six minutes.

I didn't ask any questions. I was beginning to fear from her queer conduct that the case was getting on Miss Harvey's nerves. She herself had eliminated Van Vleek—why was she indulging in mysterious measurements of distances from his house? Next day I was even more mystified, for she asked me to go with her to see President Van Vleek.

HE RECEIVED us in the directors' room of the bank, and the questions that Heloise asked him would have amused me had I not felt more than passing interest in her. As it was, I was troubled, fearing what he might think. All she appeared to want to know was about locks and keys, and, as far as I could see, she never asked a question that could by any possibility do Morbray's cause any good. But although many of her inquiries were silly, Van Vleek seemed willing enough to answer them.

Finally, however, she asked something that at least had bearing on the case. "Those two keys that had to be used at the same time to open the inner vault, Mr. Van Vleek," she said—"how did they differ?"

"Well," replied the president, "they—but it's simpler to let you see for yourself."

With that he reached around to his keychain and pulled from his pocket the bunch of keys attached to it. He was trying to detach a key when Heloise laid her taper fingers upon the back of his hand.

"Oh, don't trouble to remove them, Mr. Van Vleek," she said. "I can see them quite well as they are."

The next thing I knew, she had the bunch in her hands and was examining the keys like a locksmith working at his trade. I was bored by the fuss she was making over the bits of metal and, between ourselves, I didn't fancy the proximity of his iron-gray hair to her blond head. So I strolled over to the other side of the room and lit a cigarette; as a result, I learned afterward, I missed the really important part of the interview.

When, ten minutes later, Heloise called me and we left the bank, I noted that her face was quite flushed and that she was smiling.

"Well," I asked as we turned the corner, "are you satisfied?"

"Quite," she replied, but her tone and the far-away expression in her eyes told me that her thoughts were not of me.

When we reached the building in which my office is, she halted. "Listen carefully please, Arthur," she said. "I am going to take the first train out of town. I shall return day after to-morrow—Thursday—and there are certain people I want you to have at your office to meet me—one at a time, please, in the order in which I will write the names, and so far apart that there will be absolutely no danger of their meeting."

She wrote the names on the back of an old envelope that I gave her and left me. There were seven names, headed by Mrs. Van Vleek and ending with Reynolds, the night watchman of the bank, and including the two nurses who attended the bank president in his illness and the three servants of the Van Vleek household. It was late the next evening before I had found them all and secured their promises to be at my office at the hours I named.

WHEN Miss Harvey came in the following morning I was worried at her appearance. Her eyes had deep circles under them, and the twitching of her fingers betrayed nervousness. My solicitude led to inquiry.

"Oh, I'm all right," she assured me. "I've been pretty busy for two days, and I never was a good traveler in a sleeping-car."

This was the first hint I had that she had made a long journey. I had no time for more questions, for she dashed into her instructions as to the part she wished me to play in the interviews. That wasn't much, it appeared. I was to be present and introduce her as a friend of my client Morbray who wanted to ask a few questions about their knowledge of the case. I was to listen to the answers and take down such as were important. Heloise knew that when I was in law school I studied shorthand, and although I suggested the stenographer, a

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clever and discreet young man whom I occasionally employed, she preferred me.

She would not have done so had she been as shaky over my shorthand as I was. Such skill as I ever possessed had gone cold from disuse, and to my struggles to put the gist of the interviews into decipherable hieroglyphics was undoubtedly due the fact that the last interview was over without my having much of an idea of what Heloise was driving at. I should add that at the last interview of all, with Reynolds, the bank's night watchman, I was not present.

"You see," said Heloise, explaining her wish to confront the old man alone, "I may say something I have no right to say, and if it proves that I am wrong I want Mr. Reynolds to forget it as soon as possible. If he doesn't forget, then there will be no one but myself to support his memory."

Heloise smiled significantly and I began to think she might be less guileless than I had imagined.

Her session with old Reynolds was protracted and it was growing dark, when he came from the inner office shaking his head, mumbling to himself and nervously thumbing the rim of his hat.

"I hope, ma'am," he was saying, "that this thing'll get me in no trouble. I've been in the bank for nearly twenty years and I shouldn't like to have any one think——"

Heloise reassured him in the soft, gentle way she has and insisted upon my clerk's calling a cab to take him to the bank. She watched from the window till the cab rolled away; then she crossed to my desk.

"Well, Arthur," she said, dropping into a chair, "it's all over but arresting the guilty man."

I looked up sharply at a curious break in her voice and saw that she was white and trembling. Before I had a chance to ask a question she burst into tears and, head on my desk, sobbed as if her heart would break. Of course it was only the nervous reaction, but I couldn't understand it then and fell to wondering what she'd got in her head as to the identity of the guilty person. Had she convinced herself that her cousin was guilty?

I had no smelling-salts and she refused water, and I was at my wits' ends when she suddenly stopped crying and, looking up into my face, calmly named one of our most respected citizens and told me it was my duty to swear out a warrant for his arrest for the theft of two hundred thousand dollars from the County National Bank.

My incredulity must have shown in my face, for Heloise laughed. "You silly old goose," she cried, "don't you see it *yet?*"

She went over her case, bit by bit, until I began to think that, perhaps, she had better tell her story to the district attorney. I said I would call him up in the morning.

"In the morning!" she echoed. "To-night! Don't you see the danger? If Reynolds should talk it might get to *him.* We don't know who his friends are. Besides, Fred must be released to-night."

I didn't disillusion her, although if Simonds took any stock in her story there was plenty of red tape to be cut before Morbray could be freed. But I rang up Simonds and he told me to come up.

WHEN we reached his house he was smoking his after-dinner cigar.

"Dan," I said after I had introduced them, "Miss Harvey has certain theories——"

"Not theories," interrupted Heloise, with a smile at me that made me well content, "but some facts, Mr. Simonds, that I think you will find interesting."

"I shall be glad to hear them," nodded the district attorney. "You suspect some one, I gather?"

"Hardly that," answered Heloise. "I *know* who robbed the County National Bank!"

"Indeed!" Simonds was more than politely interested; Heloise had evidently made an impression.

"If you wish, I will tell you what I know and how I found it out."

Simonds bowed gravely and, drawing a pencil from his pocket, picked up a block of paper on which he made occasional notes on his knee.

"I acted on the principle that in order to steal the money the thief must first have opportunity, then desire. As two keys were necessary to open the inner vault, I considered first how the two keys could be used simultaneously and by whom. One of the keys, I made sure, had never left the possession of Cashier Morbray, for he told me so."

Here was woman's credulity at its ze-

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nith and I noted that Simonds gave her a curious glance.

"Mr. Morbray also assured me that at no other time than on the two occasions on which he opened the inner vault to take out some bonds was the second key—that held by Mr. Van Vleek—in the bank. He also told me that as soon as he was through with the key it was returned to Mr. Van Vleek's wife by Teller Arnold, who went for it. This removed all possibility that the inner vault could have been opened by any one else on either of these two occasions, even had Mr. Morbray parted with his key for a moment. Besides, I talked with Mr. Arnold and felt quite sure of him."

How like a woman! I looked at Simonds and saw him flash a curious glance at Miss Harvey.

"I confess that I was very much puzzled," she went on, "for at any other time than banking hours Mr. Morbray's key would not be in the bank. I thought and thought till my head ached, but one night —it was almost morning—things suddenly straightened out; there must be two keys, one other like Mr. Morbray's."

The district attorney shifted his position and looked at me; he was evidently becoming suspicious that an imaginative girl was wasting his evening.

"That didn't seem probable when so many precautions should have been taken, but there was no other way out of it. So I went to Mr. Van Vleek and he let me inspect the keys to the inner vault. I should explain that since his recovery he has had possession of the cashier's key and opens the inner vault himself when there is need. I make this clear?"

Simonds bowed gravely.

"There were not many keys on the bunch he showed me," Heloise proceeded after a slight pause, "and only a few of the thin character that belonged to the bank. But, Mr. Simonds, I found that there were *two pairs of keys exactly alike, and these pairs of keys were those that opened the inner vault!*"

"Pray excuse me, Miss Harvey," broke in Simonds tensely; "do I understand that Mr. Van Vleek had a duplicate of the cashier's inner vault key on his bunch?"

"Precisely," smiled Heloise. "I examined them carefully. They matched perfectly. And Mr. Van Vleek admitted it."

"Why—I—I don't see why he——"

Heloise held up her hand. "Pardon me, but I know what you are thinking. Mr. Van Vleek had forgotten that there were duplicate keys, although when I demonstrated it to him he recalled that when the combination lock was changed about two years ago the makers provided a duplicate set of keys which he put on his key-ring and then forgot."

"Lucky no suspicion attaches to him," mused the district attorney, "unless perhaps——"

"He needed the money for a time?" She apparently took the words out of his mouth, for he nodded. "Of course, it couldn't be that. He is not that kind of man."

There it was again—the perverse feminine habit of applying the touchstone of personal likes and dislikes to everything.

"Having found that there were keys to open both the outer and inner vaults on Mr. Van Vleek's bunch, the next thing was to find some one who had opportunity to use them."

"And that some one must know the combination," interjected Simonds.

"Exactly. Teller Arnold being out of the question, it must have been some one who had access to the keys in the Van Vleek house."

Simonds nodded, and I noticed that he was looking at Miss Harvey intently.

"Mrs. Van Vleek corroborated all that Teller Arnold said about his connection with the keys," the girl went on. "She also told me that early in his illness her husband worried about the bank and insisted that his keys be left under his pillow, where they remained until he recovered, except when Mr. Arnold was sent for one of them with a note from Mr. Morbray."

"One of the nurses?" Simonds's words were only just audible.

Heloise shook her head. "No. I talked freely with both of them. They are devoted to their calling. Neither of them could conceive such a crime, much less execute it. Besides, they were a great help to me, for they told me that in his delirium Mr. Van Vleek talked of little else than the bank, the money in the inner vault and the keys."

Simonds straightened up in his chair and leaned forward. "Then it was *he* in his delirium?" he whispered.

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"For a moment that was my notion, but second thought told me that even in delirium he would protect the bank, not rob it. Besides, he was never left alone for an instant. Dr. Trueman would not permit it, and when one of the nurses gave out he himself remained in the sick-room two nights in succession."

FOR a full half-minute, it seemed, there was silence broken only by the ticking of the great clock in the corner of the library. Then Simonds rose and took a step toward the girl.

"So it was Maurice Trueman!" he exclaimed, almost in a whisper.

Heloise nodded. "When I found that he had the opportunity in his patient's ravings of keys and combinations of locks, I was certain of it," she said. "Then I went to Buffalo—he moved there recently, you know—and found that he was drinking heavily and gambling. He had gambled here."

"So? I never heard of it. That would explain. But how could he get to the vaults?"

"That's what I asked myself. It could not have been in banking hours, therefore it must have been at night. I found that by using side streets and alleys the round trip between house and bank could be made in less than six minutes, so he would not be likely to be missed. I believed that I knew enough to warrant my next step and I questioned Reynolds, the night watchman. He seemed honest enough, but at first he denied that any one had been admitted to the bank at night since the bank examiner's last visit. Reynolds is old and his mind is not strong, and I doubt whether he would have supplied the one thing I wanted if I hadn't helped him."

Simonds halted in front of the open fire and from his towering height looked down into her face. "Helped him? How was that, Miss Harvey?"

"I'm afraid I romanced a bit. I told him of one night in the Van Vleek house when there was a crisis in the sick-room, when the supply of a needed medicine was found to be exhausted, when there was no one awake but Dr. Trueman, and the telephone was out of order——"

"But, my dear young lady," interposed Simonds, "on what basis did you construct your—your romance?"

"Well," explained Heloise, "I had some facts. The telephone *was* out of order on one of the two nights that one of the nurses was sick. Fortunately that nurse keeps a diary. My brother is in the telephone company and I called him up and he ascertained that when the repair man went to the house next day he found that a wire had been broken. My brother also found from the records that there was a call that night from the bank for Cawley's drug store."

"A blind for the watchman. Excuse me a moment."

Simonds took up the telephone. The orders he gave sent two of his men to Buffalo on the midnight train, and the papers the next evening announced the arrest of Dr. Maurice Trueman for the theft of two hundred thousand dollars from the County National Bank.

Before we left, it was agreed that Miss Harvey's name should be kept out of the affair, and Trueman was convicted without her evidence.

I never could figure out how she dared suspect Dr. Trueman in the first place, for he was not only our leading young physician, but his social standing was high. One day I asked her.

"Why, Arthur," she replied, "I never could bear him. He has such a mean face!"

This, I submit, was a distinctly and absurdly feminine notion.

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Prester John*

by John Buchan

CHAPTER I

OF THE MAN ON THE KIRKCAPLE SHORE

I MIND as if it were yesterday my first sight of the man. Little I knew at the time how big the moment was with destiny, or how often that face, seen in the fitful moonlight, would haunt my sleep and disturb my waking hours. But I mind yet the cold grue of terror I got from it, a terror which was surely more than the due of a few truant lads breaking the Sabbath with their idle play.

The town of Kirkcaple—of which and its adjacent parish of Portincross my father was the minister—lies on a hillside above the little bay of Caple, and looks squarely out on the North Sea. Many a long Saturday I have passed in a crinkle of the cliffs, having lit a fire of driftwood, and made believe that I was a smuggler or a Jacobite new landed from France. There were a band of us in Kirkcaple, lads of my own age, including Archie Leslie, the son of my father's session-clerk, and Tam Dyke, the Provost's nephew. We were sealed to silence by the blood oath, and we bore each the name of some historic pirate or sailorman. There we foregathered in the Summer evenings and of a Saturday afternoon in Winter, and told mighty tales of our prowess and flattered our silly hearts. But the sober truth is that our deeds were of the humblest, and a dozen of fish or a handful of apples was all our booty, and our greatest exploit a fight with the roughs at the Dyve Tanwork.

My father's Spring Communion fell on the last Sabbath of April, and on the particular Sabbath of which I speak the weather was mild and bright for the time of year. There still remained the service on the Sabbath evening—a doleful prospect, for the Reverend Mr. Murdoch of Kilchristie, noted for the length of his discourses, had exchanged pulpits with my father.

So my mind was ripe for the proposal of Archie Leslie on our way home to tea that by a little skill we might give the kirk the slip. Word was sent to Tam, and so it happened that three abandoned lads duly passed the plate and took their seats in the cockloft. But when the bell had done jowing, and we heard by the sounds of their feet that the elders had gone in to the kirk, we slipped down the stairs and out of the side-door. We were through the churchyard in a twinkling, and hot-foot on the road to the Dyve Burn.

Our first care was to secrete safely our chimney-pot hats in a marked spot under some whin-bushes on the links. From inside his jacket Tam unfolded his special treasure, which was to light us on our expedition—an evil-smelling old tin lantern with a shutter.

Tam was of the Free Kirk persuasion, and as his Communion fell on a different day from ours he was spared the bondage of church attendance from which Archie

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and I had revolted. But notable events had happened that day in his church. A black man, the Reverend John Something-or-other, had been preaching. Tam was full of the portent. "A black man," he said, "a gret black chap as big as your father, Archie."

He had preached about the heathen in Africa, and how a black man was as good as a white man in sight of God, and he had forecast a day when the negroes would have something to teach the British in the way of civilization. So, at any rate, ran the account of Tam Dyke, who did not share the preacher's views.

NIGHT fell as we came to the broomy spaces of the links, and ere we had breasted the slope of the neck which separates Kirkcaple Bay from the cliffs it was as dark as an April evening with a fine moon can be. We had no need of Tam's lighting till the Dyve Burn was reached and the path began to descend steeply down the rift in the crags.

It was here we found that some one had gone before us. Archie was great in those days at tracking, his ambition running in Indian paths. He was on his knees in a second. "Lads," he cried, "there's spoor here!" And then, after some nosing: "It's a man's track, going downward—a big man with flat feet. It's fresh, too."

At this time of night and season of the year there was no call for any one to be trespassing on our preserves. Yet there was no question where our precursor had gone. He was making for the shore. "Maybe he is after our cave. We'd better go cannily."

The glim was dowsed—the words were Archie's—and in the best contraband manner we stole down the gully. The business had suddenly taken an eerie turn, and I think in our hearts we were all a little afraid. I, for one, was glad when we got through with no worse mishap than a stumble from Tam which caused the lantern-door to fly open and the candle to go out. We did not stop to relight it, but scrambled down the screes till we came to the long slabs of reddish rock abutting on the beach and dropped quietly into the crinkle of cliff which we called our cave.

There was nobody there, so we relit the lantern, examined our properties and found them safe. The band was in session, so, following our ritual, we sent out a picket. Tam was deputed to go round the edge of the cliff from which the shore was visible and report if the coast was clear.

He returned in three minutes, his eyes round with amazement. "There's a fire on the sands," he repeated, "and a man beside it!"

Here was news indeed! Without a word we made for the open, Archie first, and Tam, who had seized and shuttered his lantern, coming last. We crawled to the edge of the cliff and peered round, and there, sure enough, on the hard bit of sand which the tide had left by the burn-mouth was a twinkle of light and a dark figure.

The moon was rising, and besides there was the curious sheen from the sea which you will often notice in Spring. The glow was maybe a hundred yards distant, a little spark of fire I could have put in my cap, and, from its crackling and smoke, composed of dry seaweed and half-green branches from the burnside thickets. A man's figure stood near it, and as we looked it moved round and round the fire in circles which first of all widened and then contracted.

The sight was so unexpected, so beyond the beat of our experience, that we were all a little scared. What could this strange being want with a fire at half-past eight of an April Sabbath night on the Dyve Burn sands?

But some spell kept our feet tied there in that silent world of sand and moon and sea. For a wonder I was less afraid than curious. I wanted to discover what the man was up to with his fire and his circles. The same thought must have been in Archie's head, for he dropped on his belly and began to crawl softly seawards. I followed, and Tam, with sundry complaints, crept after my heels.

Archie, the skilled tracker, was the one who all but betrayed us. His knee slipped on the seaweed, and he rolled off a boulder, bringing down with him a clatter of small stones. We lay as still as mice, in terror lest the man should have heard the noise and have come to look for the cause. By and by, when I ventured to raise my head above a flat-topped stone, I saw that he was undisturbed. The fire still burned and he was pacing round it.

Just on the edge of the pools was an outcrop of red sandstone much fissured by

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the sea. Here was an excellent vantage-ground and all three of us curled behind it, with our eyes just over the edge. The man was huge of size—or so he seemed to me in the half-light. He wore nothing but a shirt and trousers, and I could hear by the flap of his feet on the sand that he was barefoot.

Suddenly Tam Dyke gave a gasp of astonishment. "Gosh! it's the black minister!" he said.

CHAPTER II

A DISCOVERY AND A PURSUIT

IT WAS indeed a black man, as we saw when the moon came out of a cloud. His head was on his breast, and he walked round the fire with measured, regular steps. At intervals he would stop and raise both hands to the sky and bend his body in the direction of the moon, but he never uttered a word.

"It's a magic!" said Archie. "He's going to raise Satan! We must bide here and see what happens, for he'll grip us if we try to go back. The moon's over high."

The procession continued as if to some slow music. I had been in no fear of the adventure back there by our cave, but, now that I saw the thing from close at hand, my courage began to ebb. There was something desperately uncanny about this great negro, who had shed his clerical garments and was now practising some strange magic alone by the sea. I had no doubt it was the black art, for there was that in the air and the scene which spelled the unlawful.

As we watched, the circles stopped and the man threw something on the fire. A thick smoke rose, of which we could feel the aromatic scent, and when it was gone the flame burned with a silvery blueness like moonlight. Still no sound came from the minister, but he took something from his belt and began to make odd markings in the sand between the inner circle and the fire.

As he turned, the moon gleamed on the implement and we saw it was a great knife.

We were now scared in real earnest. Here were we, three boys, at night in a lonely place a few yards from a great savage with a knife. The adventure was far past my liking, and even the intrepid Archie was having qualms, if I could judge from his set face. As for Tam, his teeth were chattering like a threshing-mill.

Suddenly I felt something soft and warm on the rock at my right hand. I felt again, and lo! it was the man's clothes. There were his boots and socks, his minister's coat and his minister's hat.

This made the predicament worse, for if we waited till he finished his rites we should for certain be found by him. At the same time, to return over the boulders in the bright moonlight seemed an equally sure way to discovery. I whispered to Archie, who was for waiting a little longer. "Something may turn up," he said. It was always his way.

I DO NOT know what would have turned up, for we had no chance of testing it. The situation had proved too much for the nerves of Tam Dyke. As the man turned towards us in his bowings and bendings, Tam suddenly sprang to his feet, and shouted at him a piece of schoolboy rudeness then fashionable in Kirkcaple:

"Wha called ye partan-face, my bonny man?"

Then, clutching his lantern, he ran for dear life, while Archie and I raced at his heels. As I turned, I had a glimpse of a huge figure, knife in hand, bounding towards us.

Though I saw it only in the turn of a head, the face stamped itself indelibly upon my mind. It was black, black as ebony, but it was different from the ordinary negro. There were no thick lips and flat nostrils; rather, if I could trust my eyes, the nose was high-bridged and the lines of the mouth sharp and firm. But it was distorted into an expression of such terror and devilish fury and amazement, that my heart became like water.

We had a start as I have said of some twenty or thirty yards. Among the boulders we were not at a great disadvantage, for a boy can flit quickly over them, while a grown man must pick his way. Archie, as ever, kept his wits the best of us.

"Make straight for the burn!" he shouted. "We'll beat him on the slope!"

We passed the boulders and slithered over the outcrop of red rock and the patches of sea-pink till we reached the channel of the Dyve water. I stopped involuntarily, and

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that halt was nearly my undoing. For our pursuer had reached the burn before us, but lower down, and was coming up its bank to cut us off.

At most times I am a notable coward, and in these days I was still more of one, owing to a quick and easily heated imagination. But now I think I did a brave thing, though more by instinct than resolution. Archie was running first and had already splashed through the burn, Tam came next, just about to cross, and the Black Man was almost at his elbow. Another second and Tam would have been in his clutches, had I not yelled out a warning and made straight up the bank of the burn. Tam fell into the pool—I could hear his spluttering cry—but he got across, for I heard Archie call to him, and the two vanished into the thicket which clothes all the left bank of the gully. The pursuer, seeing me on his own side of the water, followed straight on, and before I knew it, it had become a race between the two of us.

I was light on my feet and uncommonly sound in wind. I flew up the steep screes, not daring to look round; but at the top where the rocks begin I had a glimpse of my pursuer. The man could run! Heavy in build though he was, he was not six yards behind me and I could see the white of his eyes and the red of his gums. I saw something else—a glint of white metal in his hand. He still had his knife!

Fear sent me up the rocks like a sea-gull. Something told me that the pursuit was slacking, and for a moment I halted to look round. A second time a halt was nearly the end of me. A great stone flew through the air and took the cliff an inch from my head, half-blinding me with splinters. And now I began to get angry. I pulled myself into cover, skirted a rock till I came to my corner, and looked back for the enemy.

There he was, scrambling by the way I had come and making a prodigious clatter among the stones. I picked up a loose bit of rock and hurled it with all my force in his direction. It broke before it reached him, but a considerable lump, to my joy, took him full in the face. Then my terrors revived; I slipped behind the waterfall and was soon in the thicket and toiling towards the top.

I think this last bit was the worst in the race, for my strength was failing and I seemed to hear those horrid steps at my heels. My heart was in my mouth as, careless of my best clothes, I tore through the hawthorn bushes. Then I struck the path and, to my relief, came on Archie and Tam who were running slowly, in desperate anxiety about my fate. We then took hands and soon reached the top of the gully.

Far down the burn we could hear the sounds as of some one going back to the sands.

We did not dare take the road by the links, but made for the nearest human habitation. This was a farm about half a mile inland, and when we reached it we lay down by the stockyard gate and panted.

"I've lost my lantern," said Tam. "The big black brute! See if I don't tell my father."

"Ye'll do nothing of the kind!" said Archie fiercely. "He knows nothing about us and can't do us any harm. But if the story got out, and he found out who we were, he'd murder the lot of us!"

He made us swear secrecy, which we were willing enough to do, seeing very clearly the sense in his argument.

WE WERE not destined to escape without detection. As ill luck would have it, Mr. Murdoch had been taken ill with the stomach-ache after the second psalm, and the congregation had been abruptly dispersed. My mother had waited for me at the church door and—the truth had come out.

My father arrived before breakfast next day, and I was duly and soundly whipped. I set out for school with aching bones to add to the usual depression of Monday morning. At the corner of the Nethergate I fell in with Archie, who was staring at a trap carrying two men which was coming down the street. It was the Free Church minister—he had married a rich wife and kept a horse—driving the preacher of yesterday to the railway station. Archie and I were in behind a doorpost in a twinkling, so that we could see in safety the last of our enemy.

He was dressed in minister's clothes with a heavy fur-coat and a brand-new yellow-leather Gladstone bag. He was talking loudly as he passed, and the Free Church minister seemed to be listening attentively. I heard his deep voice saying something about the "work of God in this place." But what I noticed specially—and the

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sight made me forget my aching hinder parts—was that he had a swollen eye and two strips of sticking-plaster on his cheek.

CHAPTER III

FORTH! FORTUNE!

IF FATE had been kinder to me, I think I might have become a scholar. At any rate I was just acquiring a taste for philosophy and the dead languages, when my father died suddenly of a paralytic shock, and I had to set about earning a living.

At this point an uncle of my mother's stepped forward with a proposal. He was a well-to-do bachelor, alone in the world, and he invited my mother to live with him and take care of his house. For myself he proposed a post in some mercantile concern, for he had much influence in the circles of commerce.

"You see, Davie," he explained, "by the mercy of Providence I met yesterday an old friend, Thomas Mackenzie. He is the head of one of the biggest trading and shipping concerns in the world—Mackenzie, Muir & Oldmeadows—you may have heard the name. Among other things he has half the stores in South Africa, where they sell everything from Bibles to fish-hooks. Apparently they like men from home to manage the stores, and to make a long story short, when I put your case to him, he promised you a place. You are to be assistant storekeeper at——" (my uncle fumbled in his pocket, and then read from the yellow slip) "at Blaauwildebeestefontein. There's a mouthful for you!"

In this homely way I first heard of a place which was to be the theater of so many strange doings.

I SAILED from Southampton by an intermediate steamer, and I went steerage to save expense. Happily my acute homesickness was soon forgotten in another kind of malady, and it was not till we got into the fair-weather seas around Madeira that I recovered enough to sit on deck and observe my fellow-passengers. I early found a friend in a little man with a yellow beard and spectacles, who sat down beside me and remarked on the weather in a strong Scotch accent.

He turned out to be a Mr. Wardlaw from Aberdeen, who was going out to be a schoolmaster. He was a man of good education, who had taken a University degree and had taught for some years as an undermaster in a school in his native town. But the east winds had damaged his lungs, and he had been glad to take the chance of a poorly paid country school in the veld. When I asked him where he was going I was amazed to be told that it was Blaauwildebeestefontein.

Mr. Wardlaw was a pleasant little man, with a sharp tongue but a cheerful temper. He labored all day at primers of the Dutch and Kaffir tongues, but in the evening after supper he would walk with me on the after-deck and discuss the future.

"The place, Blaauwildebeestefontein," he used to say, "is among the Zoutspanberg Mountains, and, as far as I can see, not above ninety miles from the railhead. The name means the 'Spring of the Blue Wildebeeste,' whatever fearsome animal that may be."

There was another steerage passenger whom I could not help observing because of my dislike of his appearance. He, too, was a little man, by name Henriques, and in looks the most atrocious villain I have ever clapped eyes on. He had a face the color of French mustard—a sort of dirty green—and bloodshot beady eyes with the whites all yellowed with fever. Once I tripped on him in the dark, and he turned on me with a snarl and an oath. I was short enough with him in return, and he looked as if he could knife me.

"I'll wager that fellow has been a slave-driver in his time," I told Mr. Wardlaw, who said, "God pity his slaves, then!"

And now I come to the startling incident which made the rest of that long voyage pass all too soon for me, and fore-shadowed the strange events which were to come. It was the day after we crossed the Line, and the first-class passengers were having deck-sports, when my eye caught a figure which seemed to have little interest in the games. A large man in clerical clothes was sitting in a deck-chair reading a book. There was nothing novel about the stranger, and I can not explain the impulse which made me wish to see his face. I moved a few steps up the deck, and then I saw that his skin was black. I went a little farther, and suddenly he raised his eyes from his book and looked round. It was

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the face of the man who had terrified me years ago on the Kirkcaple shore!

I spent the rest of the day in a brown study. It was clear to me that some destiny had prearranged this meeting. Here was this man traveling prosperously as a first-class passenger with all the appurtenances of respectability. I alone had seen him invoking strange gods in the moonlight, I alone knew of the devilry in his heart, and I could not but believe that some day or other there might be virtue in that knowledge. He was down on the Purser's list as the Reverend John Laputa, and his destination was Durban.

The next day being Sunday, who should appear to address us steerage passengers but the black minister! He was introduced by the Captain himself, a notably pious man, who spoke of the labors of his brother in the dark places of heathendom. Some of us were hurt in our pride in being made the target of a black man's oratory. Mr. Henriques, especially, whose skin spoke of the tar-brush, protested vigorously and with oaths against the insult.

The man's face was as commanding as his figure, and his voice was the most wonderful thing that ever came out of human mouth. It was full and rich and gentle, with the tones of a great organ. He had none of the squat and preposterous negro lineaments, but a hawk nose like an Arab's, dark, flashing eyes, and a cruel and resolute mouth. He was black as my hat, but for the rest he might have sat for a figure of a Crusader. I do not know what the sermon was about, though others told me that it was excellent. All the time I watched him and kept saying to myself, "You hunted me up the Dyve Burn, but I bashed your face for you." Indeed, I thought I could see faint scars on his cheek.

The following night I had toothache and could not sleep. It was too hot to breathe under cover, so I got up, lit a pipe, and walked on the after-deck to ease the pain. As I passed by the companionway to the lower deck, I heard voices, and peeping over the rail, I saw two men sitting in the shadow just beyond the hatch of the hold. The next second I had slipped back, and stolen across the after-deck to a point just above them. For the two were the black minister and that ugly yellow villain, Henriques.

They spoke low, and in some tongue which may have been Kaffir or Portuguese. I lay, cramped and eager, for many minutes, when a familiar name caught my ear. Henriques said something in which I caught the word, "Blaauwildebeestefontein." The minister repeated the name, and for the next few minutes it recurred often in their talk. I went back stealthily to bed, having something to make me forget my aching tooth. First of all, Laputa and Henriques were allies. Second, the place I was bound for had something to do with their schemes.

I said nothing to Mr. Wardlaw, but spent the next week in the assiduous toil of the amateur detective, but I never found them again together.

CHAPTER IV

A PLACE WITH A SECRET

AT CAPE TOWN Henriques went ashore and did not return. The minister did not budge from the ship the three days we lay in port, and, I think, kept his cabin.

At Durban Harbor it was necessary for me to change my ship, for in the interests of economy I was going by sea to Delagoa Bay, and thence by the short railway journey into the Transvaal. I sought out a cousin of mine, and found a comfortable lodging for the three days of my stay there. I made inquiries about Mr. Laputa, but could hear nothing.

My second task was to see the Durban manager of my firm. He was a certain Mr. Colles, a big fat man, who welcomed me in his shirt-sleeves, with a big cigar in his mouth, and took me home to dinner with him.

"Mr. Mackenzie has written about you," he said. "I'll be quite frank with you, Mr. Crawfurd. The firm is not exactly satisfied about the way business has been going lately at Blaauwildebeestefontein. There's a grand country up there, and a grand opportunity for the man who can take it. Japp, who is in charge, is an old man now and past his best, but he has been long with the firm and we don't want to hurt his feelings. When he goes—which must be pretty soon—you'll have a good chance of the place, if you show yourself an active young fellow."

He told me a good deal more about Blaauwildebeestefontein, principally trading details. Incidentally he let drop that Mr. Japp had had several assistants in the

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last few years. I asked him why they had left, and he hesitated.

"It's a lonely place, and they didn't like the life. You see, there are few white men near, and young fellows want society. They complained, and were moved on. But the firm didn't think the more of them."

I told him I had come out with the new schoolmaster.

"Yes," he said reflectively, "the school! That's been vacant pretty often lately."

"What's the matter with the place? There must be more wrong with it than loneliness to make everybody clear out. I have taken on this job and I mean to stick to it, so you needn't be afraid to tell me."

The manager looked at me sharply. "That's the way to talk, my lad! You look as if you had a stiff back, so I'll be frank with you. There *is* something about the place. It gives the ordinary man the jumps. What it is I don't know, and the men who come back don't know themselves. I want you to find out for me. You'll be doing the firm an enormous service if you can get on the track of it. It may be the natives, or it may be the *taakhaars*, or it may be something else. Only old Japp can stick it out, and he's too old and doddering to care about moving. I want you to keep your eyes skinned, and write privately to me if you want any help. Don't talk, don't meddle with drink, learn all you can of the native jabber, but don't let on you understand a word."

THAT night I embarked on a cargo boat which was going round the coast to Delagoa Bay. It is a small world—at least for us far-wandering Scots. For who should I find when I got on board but my old friend, Tam Dyke, who was Second Mate on the vessel? We wrung each other's hands, and I answered, as best I could, his questions about Kirkcaple. I had supper with him in the cabin, and went on deck to see the moorings cast off.

Suddenly there was a bustle on the quay, and a big man with a hand-bag forced his way up the gangway. The men who were getting ready to cast off tried to stop him, but he elbowed his way forward, declaring he must see the Captain. Tam went up to him and asked civilly if he had a passage taken. He admitted he had not, but said he would make it right in two minutes with the Captain himself. The Reverend John Laputa, for some reason of his own, was leaving Durban with more haste than he had entered it.

I do not know what passed with the Captain, but the minister got his passage right enough, and Tam was even turned out of his cabin to make room for him. This annoyed my friend intensely. "That black brute must be made of money, for he paid through the nose for this, or I'm a Dutchman. My old man doesn't take to his black brethren any more than I do. Hang it all! what are we coming to when we're turning into a blooming cargo boat for natives?"

I had all too little of Tam's good company, for on the afternoon of the second day we reached the little town of Lorenzo Marques. Tam took me to supper with a friend of his, a Scot by the name of Aitken, a strong, broad-shouldered fellow who, during the war, had done secret-service work in Delagoa. He had hunted, too, and traded up and down Mozambique, and knew every dialect of the Kaffirs.

"You're going to a rum place, Mr. Crawfurd," he said.

"So I'm told. Do you know anything about it?"

"I've never been there," he said, "though I've been pretty near it from the Portuguese side. That's the funny thing about Blaauwildebeestefontein—everybody has heard of it and nobody knows it."

"I wish you would tell me what you have heard."

"Well, the natives are queer up thereaways. There's some kind of a holy place which every Kaffir from Algoa Bay to the Zambesi and away beyond knows about. When I've been hunting in the *bushveld* I've often met strings of Kaffirs from hundreds of miles distant, and they've all been going or coming from Blaauwildebeestefontein. It's like Mecca to the Mohammedans—a place they go to on pilgrimage. I've heard of an old man up there who is believed to be two hundred years old. Anyway there's some sort of great witch or wizard living in the mountains."

Aitken smoked in silence for a time; then he said, "I'll tell you another thing. I believe there's a diamond mine. I've often meant to go up and look for it."

Tam and I pressed him to explain, which he did slowly, after his fashion.

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"Did you ever hear of I. D. B.?" he asked me. "Well, it's notorious that the Kaffirs on the diamond fields get away with a fair number of stones, and they are bought by Jew and Portuguese traders. It's against the law to deal in them, and when I was in the Intelligence here we used to have a lot of trouble with the vermin. But I discovered that most of the stones came from natives in one part of the country—more or less round Blaauwildebeestefontein.

"Indeed, some of the stones I got hold of were quite different from any I had seen in South Africa before. Maybe some day I'll take a run up to see you and look into the matter."

After this the talk turned on other topics till Tam, still nursing his grievance, asked about the native parson named Laputa.

Aitken shook his head: "No, I don't know the man. You say he landed here? Well, I'll keep a lookout for him. Big native ministers are not so common."

Then I asked about Henriques, of whom Tam knew nothing.

"If he's a rascal, as you think, you may be certain he's in the I. D. B. business, and if I'm right about Blaauwildebeestefontein you'll likely have news of him there some time or other. Drop me a line if he comes, and I'll get on to his record."

I saw Tam off in the boat with a fairly satisfied mind. I was going to a place with a secret, and I meant to find it out.

"I can see you're in for a queer job," Tam had said. "Promise to let me hear from you if there's going to be a row, and I'll come upcountry, though I should have to desert the service. You haven't forgotten the Dyve Burn, Davie?"

CHAPTER V

BLAAUWILDEBEESTEFONTEIN

AFTER a trip of many dusty miles by rail and a wearisome journey in a Cape-cart through arid plains and dry and stony gorges I had come suddenly into a haven of green. The Spring of the Blue Wildebeeste was a clear, rushing mountain torrent, which swirled over blue rocks into deep fern-fringed pools. All around was a table-land of lush grass with marigolds and arum lilies instead of daisies and buttercups. Thickets of tall trees dotted the hill slopes and patched the meadows, and on the very edge of the plateau where the road dipped for the descent, stood the shanties of Blaauwildebeestefontein.

Blaauwildebeestefontein had no more than two buildings of civilized shape: the store, which stood on the left side of the river and the schoolhouse opposite. For the rest, there were some twenty native huts, higher up the slope, of the type which the Dutch call *rondavels*. The store was empty, and a cloud of flies buzzed over the sugar-cask.

Two doors opened at the back, and I chose the one to the right. I found myself in a kind of kitchen with a bed in one corner, and a litter of dirty plates on the small table.

On the bed lay a man, snoring heavily. I went close to him and found an old fellow with a bald head, clothed only in a shirt and trousers. His face was red and swollen, and his breath came in heavy grunts. A smell of bad whisky hung over everything. I had no doubt that this was Mr. Peter Japp, my senior in the store. One reason for the indifferent trade at Blaauwildebeestefontein was very clear to me.

I went back to the shop and tried the other door. It was a bedroom too, but clean and pleasant. A little native girl—Zeeta, I found they called her—was busy tidying it up, and when I entered she dropped me a curtsy. "This is your room, *baas*," she said in very good English in reply to my question.

I found the schoolmaster sitting under his own fig-tree, reading one of his Kaffir primers. Having come direct by rail from Cape Town he had been a week in the place, and ranked as the second oldest white resident.

"Yon's a bonny c[illegible]f you've got, Davie," were his first words. "For three days he's been as fu' as the Baltic. Besides you and me, he's the only white man in the place. It's a poor lookout on the social side."

The school, it appeared, was the merest farce. There were only five white children belonging to Dutch farmers in the mountains.

The native side was more flourishing, but the mission schools in the locations got most of the native children who lived in the neighborhood.

When I crossed the road to the store, Japp was still sleeping, so I got a bowl of mealie porridge from Zeeta and went to bed.

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JAPP was sober next morning, and made me some kind of apology. He had chronic lumbago, he said, and "to go on the bust" now and then was the best cure for it. Then he proceeded to initiate me into my duties in tones of exaggerated friendliness.

The first day or two things went well enough. There was no doubt that, properly handled, a fine trade could be done in Blaauwildebeestefontein. I flung myself into the work, and in a few weeks had been all round the farms and locations. At first Japp praised my energy, for it left him plenty of leisure to sit indoors and drink. But soon he grew suspicious, for he must have seen that I was in a fair way to oust him altogether. He was very anxious to know if I had seen Colles in Durban and what the manager had said.

"I have letters," he told me a hundred times, "from Mr. Mackenzie himself, praising me up to the skies. The firm couldn't get along without old Peter Japp, I can tell you."

The truth is he was a disgusting old ruffian. His character was shown by his treatment of Zeeta. The poor child slaved all day and did two men's work in keeping the household going. She was an orphan from a mission station and in Japp's opinion a creature without rights. Hence he never spoke to her except with a curse, and used to cuff her thin shoulders till my blood boiled.

One day things became too much for my temper. Zeeta had spilled half a glass of Japp's whisky while tidying up the room. He picked up a *sjambok* and proceeded to beat her unmercifully till her cries brought me on the scene. I tore the whip from his hands, seized him by the scruff and flung him on a heap of potato-sacks, where he lay pouring out abuse and shaking with rage. Then I spoke my mind. After a time he apologized, but I could see that thenceforth he regarded me with deadly hatred.

There was another thing I noticed about Mr. Japp. He might brag about his knowledge of how to deal with natives, but to my mind his methods were a disgrace to a white man. There were Kaffirs whom he treated with a sort of cringing friendliness. A big black fellow would swagger into the shop and be received by Japp as if he were his long-lost brother. The two would collogue for hours, and it was the white man who fawned and the black man who bullied.

Once when Japp was away one of these fellows came into the store as if it belonged to him, but he went out quicker than he entered. Japp complained afterwards of my behavior.

"'Mwanga is a good friend of mine," he said, "and brings us a lot of business. I'll thank you to be civil to him the next time."

I replied very shortly that 'Mwanga or anybody else who did not mend his manners would feel the weight of my boot.

The thing went on, and I am not sure that he did not give the Kaffirs drink on the sly. I discussed the matter with Mr. Wardlaw, who said, "I believe the old villain has got some sort of black secret, and the natives know it, and have got a pull on him." And I was inclined to think he was right.

BY AND BY I began to feel the lack of company, for Wardlaw was so full of his books that he was of little use as a companion. So I resolved to acquire a dog, and bought one from a prospector. It was an enormous Boer hunting-dog, a mongrel in whose blood ran mastiff and bulldog and foxhound and heaven knows what beside. In color it was a kind of brindled red, and the hair on its back grew against the lie of the rest of its coat.

Some one had told me, or I may have read it, that a back like this meant that a dog would face anything mortal, even to a charging lion, and it was this feature which first caught my fancy.

Colin—for so I named him—began his career with me by taking the seat out of my breeches and frightening Mr. Wardlaw into a tree. It took me a stubborn battle of a fortnight to break his vice, and my left arm to-day bears witness to the struggle. After that he became a second shadow, and wo betide the man who had dared to raise his hand to Colin's master! Japp declared the dog was a devil, and Colin repaid the compliment with a hearty dislike.

With Colin I now took to spending some of my ample leisure in exploring the fastnesses of the Berg. I had been born with a good eye and a steady hand, and very soon I became a fair shot with a gun, and I believe a really creditable shot with the rifle. And by and by I learned something of veldcraft. I learned how to follow spoor, how to allow for the wind, and stalk under cover. Then, when a shot had crippled

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the beast, Colin was on its track like a flash to pull it down. The dog had the nose of a retriever, the speed of a greyhound, and the strength of a bull-terrier. I blessed the day when the wandering prospector had passed the store.

One night I was going to bed, when suddenly the bristles rose on the dog's back and he barked uneasily at the window. As I stepped to the window I saw a black face disappear below the palisade of the back yard. The incident was trifling, but it put me on my guard.

The next night I looked but saw nothing. The third night I looked and caught a glimpse of a face almost pressed to the pane. Thereafter I put up the shutters after dark, and shifted my bed to a part of the room out of line with the window.

It was the same out-of-doors. The stalking was brilliantly done, for I never caught a glimpse of one of the stalkers. Wherever I went—on the road—on the meadows of the plateau, or on the rugged sides of the Berg—it was the same. Only when I went down to the plains did the espionage cease. This thing annoyed Colin desperately, and his walks abroad were one continuous growl.

Since I came to Blaauwildebeestefontein I had forgotten the mystery I had set out to track, but now this espionage brought back my old preoccupation. My suspicions fastened on to Japp, but I soon gave up that clue. It was my presence in the store that was a danger to him, not my wanderings about the countryside.

I had visited all the surrounding locations, and was on good enough terms with all the surrounding chiefs. There was 'Mpofu, a dingy old fellow who had spent a good deal of his life in a Boer jail before the war. There was a mission station at his place, and his people seemed to be well-behaved and prosperous. Majinje was a chieftainess, a little girl whom nobody was allowed to see. Her location was a miserable affair, and her tribe was yearly shrinking in numbers.

Then there was Magata farther north among the mountains. He had no quarrel with me, for he used to give me a meal when I went out hunting in that direction, and once he turned out a hundred of his young men and I had a great battue of wild dogs. Sikitola, the biggest of all, lived some distance out in the flats. I knew less about him, but if his men were the trackers they must have spent most of their days a weary way from their *kraal*. The Kaffirs in the huts at Blaauwildebeestefontein were mostly Christian, and quiet, decent fellows who farmed their little gardens and certainly preferred me to Japp.

It was as clear as daylight that the place held some secret, and I wondered if old Japp knew. I was fool enough one day to ask him about diamonds. He met me with contemptuous laughter.

I made some cautious inquiries, too, chiefly through Mr. Wardlaw, who was becoming a great expert at Kaffir, about the existence of Aitken's wizard, but he could get no news. The most he found out was that there was a good cure for fever among Sikitola's men, and that Majinje, if she pleased, could bring rain.

The upshot of it all was that, after much brooding, I wrote a letter to Mr. Colles and, to make sure of its going, gave it to a missionary to post in Pietersdorp. I told him frankly what Aitken had said, and I also told him about the espionage. I said nothing about old Japp, for, beast as he was, I did not want him at his age to be without a livelihood.

CHAPTER VI

OF MY JOURNEY TO THE WINTER-VELD

A REPLY came from Colles, addressed not to me, but to Japp. It seemed that the old fellow had once suggested the establishment of a branch store at a place out in the plains called Umvelos', and the firm was now prepared to take up the scheme. Japp was in high good humor, and showed me the letter. Not a word was said of what I had written about; only the bare details about starting the branch. I was to get a couple of masons, load up two wagons with bricks and timber, and go down to Umvelos' and see the store built.

I confess I was hurt by the manager's silence on what seemed to me more vital matters, but I got the bricks and timber from Pietersdorp, and hired two Dutch masons to run the job. The place was not very far from Sikitola's *kraal*, so there would be no difficulty about native helpers. I discovered that some big droves were passing on a certain day and that the Boer owners and their families were traveling

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with them in wagons. Accordingly I had a light *naachtmaal* fitted up as a sort of traveling store, and with my two wagons full of building material joined the caravan.

Oxen travel slowly, and we *outspanned* that night half a day's march short of Umvelos'. I spent the hour before sunset lounging and smoking with the Dutch farmers. At first they had been silent and suspicious of a newcomer, but by this time I talked their *taal* fluently, and we were soon on good terms.

After supper we sat smoking and talking round the fire, the women and children being snug in the covered wagons. Very carefully I repeated a tale I said I had heard at Durban of a great wizard somewhere in the Berg and asked if any one knew of it. They shook their heads. The natives had given up witchcraft and big medicine, they said, and were more afraid of a parson or a policeman than any witch-doctor. Then old Coetzee, who was deaf, broke in and asked to have my question repeated.

"Yes," he said. "I know. It is in the Rooirand. There is a devil dwells there."

His grandfather and father had seen it, and he himself had heard it roaring when he had gone there as a boy to hunt. He would explain no further, and went to bed.

NEXT morning, close to Sikitola's *kraal*, I bade the farmers good-by. As soon as they had gone I had out my map and searched it for the name old Coetzee had mentioned. It was a very bad map, but I found the word "Rooirand" marking an eastern continuation of the northern wall, and probably set down from some hunter's report. The greatest river of the plain, into which the others flow, is the Groot or Big Labonga, which appears full-born from some subterranean source close to the place called Umvelos'.

It seemed to me unlikely that a spring in the bush could produce so great a river, and I decided that its source must lie in the mountains to the north. As well as I could guess, the Rooirand, the nearest part of the Berg, was about fifty miles distant. Old Coetzee had said that there was a devil in the place, but I thought that if it were explored the first thing found would be a fine stream of water.

We got to Umvelos' after midday and *outspanned* for our three weeks' work. At first I acted as shopkeeper in the *naachtmaal*, but I soon cleared out my stores to the Dutch farmers and the natives, and then it occurred to me that I might profitably give some of my leisure to the Rooirand. I could see the wall of the mountains quite clear to the north, within an easy day's ride.

So one morning I packed enough food for a day or two, tied my sleeping-bag on my saddle, and set off to explore. Slowly as I advanced I began to make out the details of the cliffs. The wall—reddish-purple it looked, and, I thought, of porphyry—was continuous and unbroken. There were chimneys and fissures, but none great enough to hold a river. The top was sheer cliff; then came loose *kranzes* in tiers like the seats in a gallery; and below, a dense thicket of trees. I raked the whole line for a break, but there seemed none. "It's a bad job for me," I thought, "if there is no water, for I must pass the night there."

The night was spent in a sheltered nook at the foot of the rocks, but my horse and I went to bed without a drink. My supper was some raisins and biscuits, for I did not dare to run the risk of increasing my thirst.

In the morning I had an exceedingly difficult problem to face. Water I must find at all costs, or I must go home at once, and the more I looked at these red cliffs the more eager I was to find out their secret. There must be water somewhere, otherwise how account for the lushness of the vegetation?

Then, taking my courage in both my hands, I decided. I gave my pony a cut and set him off on the homeward road, knowing he was safe to get back in four or five hours. I had tied my sleeping-bag on to the saddle, and had with me but two pocketfuls of food. I had also fastened on the saddle a letter to my Dutch foreman bidding him send a native with a spare horse to fetch me by the evening. Then I started off to look for a chimney.

I walked many weary miles along the cliff-foot before I found a feasible road. It was no light task to fight one's way through the dense undergrowth of the lower slopes; it grew very hot, and the screes above the thicket were blistering to the touch. My

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tongue, too, stuck to the roof of my mouth with thirst.

Still going eastwards, I found a sloping ledge which took me to a platform from which ran a crack with a little tree growing in it. My glass showed me that beyond this tree the crack broadened into a clearly defined chimney which led to the top. "If I can once reach that tree," I thought, "the battle is won."

The crack was only a few inches wide, large enough to let in an arm and a foot, and it ran slantwise up a perpendicular rock. I do not think I realized how bad it was till I had gone too far to return. Then my foot jammed, and I paused for breath with my legs and arms cramping rapidly.

With immense labor I found a chock-stone above my head and managed to force my foot free. The next few yards were not so difficult, and then I stuck once more.

For the crack suddenly grew shallow as the cliff bulged out above me. I had almost given up hope, when I saw that about three feet above my head grew the tree. If I could reach it and swing out I might hope to pull myself up to the ledge on which it grew. I confess it needed all my courage, for I did not know but that the tree might be loose and that it and I might go rattling down four hundred feet. It was my only hope, however, so I set my teeth and, wriggling up a few inches, made a grab at it. Thank God, it held! and with a great effort I pulled my shoulder over the ledge and breathed freely.

My difficulties were not ended, but the worst was past, and presently a very limp and weary figure lay on the cliff-top.

When I scrambled to my feet and looked round I saw a wonderful prospect. It was a plateau like the high-veld, only covered with bracken and little bushes like hazels. Three or four miles off the ground rose and a shallow vale opened. But in the foreground, half a mile or so distant, a lake lay gleaming in the sun!

I could scarcely believe my eyes until I drank my fill and then stripped and swam in the blessed coolness. After that I ate some luncheon and sunned myself.

I walked round the lake to look for an outlet. A fine mountain stream came in at the north end, and at the south end, sure enough, a considerable river debouched. My exploring zeal redoubled, and I followed its course in a delirium of expectation. It was a noble stream, clear as crystal, and very unlike the muddy tropical Lebonga at Umvelos'. Suddenly, about a quarter of a mile from the lake, with a swirl and a hollow roar it disappeared into a pot-hole. I walked a few steps on, and from below my feet came the most uncanny rumbling and groaning. Then I knew what old Coetzee's devil was that howled in the Rooirand!

Had I continued my walk to the edge of the cliff I might have learned a secret which would have stood me in good stead later. But the descent began to make me anxious, and I was resolved that nothing would make me descend by that awesome crack, so I kept on eastward along the top to look for a better way. I found one about a mile farther on, which, though far from easy, had no special risks save from the appalling looseness of the débris.

When I got down at length, I found that it was near sunset. I went to the place I had bidden my native look for me, but, as I had feared, there was no sign of him. So, making the best of a bad job, I had supper and a pipe, and spent a very chilly night in a hole among the boulders.

I GOT up at dawn, very stiff and cold, and ate a few raisins for breakfast. There was no sign of horses so I resolved to fill up the time in looking for a fold of the cliff which, as I had seen from the horrible crack of yesterday, contained a gully.

Suddenly, as I neared the place, I heard the strangest sound coming from the rocks. It was a deep muffled groaning, so eerie and unearthly that for the moment I stood and shivered. Then I remembered my river of yesterday. It must be above this place that it descended into the earth, and in the hush of dawn the sound was naturally louder. No wonder old Coetzee had been afraid of devils!

While I was standing awestruck at the sound, I observed a figure moving toward the cliffs. I was well in cover, so I could not have been noticed. It was a very old man, very tall, but bowed in the shoulders, who was walking slowly with bent head. He was a native, but of a type I had never seen before. A long white beard fell on his breast, and a magnificent *kaross* of leopard-skin covered his shoulders. His face was seamed and lined and shrunken, so that he seemed as old as Time itself.

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Very carefully I crept after him, and found myself opposite the fold where the gully was. There was a clear path through the jungle, a path worn smooth by many feet. I followed it through the undergrowth and over the screes till it turned inside the fold of the gully, and then it stopped short. I was in a deep cleft, but in front was a slab of sheer rock. Above, the gully looked darker and deeper, but there was this great slab to pass. I examined the sides, but they were sheer rock with no openings.

Had I had my wits about me I would have gone back and followed the spoor, noting where it stopped. But the whole thing looked black magic to me, my stomach was empty and my enterprise small. Besides, in my ears there was the terrible moaning of the imprisoned river. I am ashamed to confess it, but I ran from that gully as if the devil and all his angels had been following me. Indeed, I did not slacken till I had put a good mile between me and these uncanny cliffs. After that I set out to foot it back.

I walked twenty-five miles in a vile temper, enraged at my Dutchmen, my natives and everybody. About half-way home I found a boy and two horses, and soundly I cursed him. It seemed that my pony had returned right enough, and the boy had been sent to fetch me. He had got half-way before sunset the night before and there he had stayed.

I discovered from him that he was scared to death and did not dare go any nearer the Rooirand. It was accursed, he said, for it was an abode of devils, and only wizards went near it. I was bound to admit to myself that I could not blame him.

At last I had got on the track of something certain about this mysterious country, and all the way back I wondered if I should have the courage to follow it up.

CHAPTER VII

MR. WARDLAW HAS A PREMONITION

A WEEK later the building job was finished, I locked the door of the new store, pocketed the key, and we set out for home. Sikitola was entrusted with the general care of it, and I knew him well enough to be sure that he would keep his people from doing mischief.

I stabled my horse and went round to the back to see Colin. Then some whim seized me to enter the store through my bedroom window. It was open and I crawled softly in to find the door was ajar, and, hearing voices, I peeped into the shop.

Japp was sitting on the counter talking in a low voice to a big native—the same 'Mwanga whom I had bundled out unceremoniously. The outer door was shut—a most unusual thing in the afternoon. Japp had some small objects in his hand, and the two were evidently arguing about a price. I was just about to push the door open, when something in Japp's face arrested me.

The low tones went on for a little, both men talking in Kaffir, and then Japp lifted up one of the little objects between finger and thumb. It was a small roundish stone about the size of a bean, but even in that half light there was a dull luster in it.

At that I shoved the door open and went in. Both men started as if they had been shot. Japp went as white as his mottled face permitted. "What the——," he gasped, and he dropped the thing he was holding.

I picked it up and laid it on the counter. "So!" I said, "diamonds, Mr. Japp! You have found the pipe I was looking for. I congratulate you!"

My words gave the old ruffian his cue. "Yes, yes," he said, "I have, or rather my friend 'Mwanga has. He has just been telling me about it."

The Kaffir looked miserably uncomfortable. He shifted from one leg to the other, casting longing glances at the closed door.

"I tink I go," he said. "Afterwards we will speak more."

I opened the door for him. Then I bolted it again and turned to Mr. Japp.

"So that's your game!" I said. "I thought there was something funny about you, but I didn't know it was I. D. B. you were up to."

He looked as if he could kill me. For five minutes he cursed me with a perfection of phrase which I had thought beyond him. It was no I. D. B., he declared, but a pipe which Mwanga had discovered.

"In this kind of country," I said, quoting words he had once used to me, "why, you might as well expect to find ocean pearls as diamonds."

He choked down his wrath and tried a

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new tack. "What will you take to hold your tongue? I'll make you a rich man, if you'll come in with me!"

I stalked over to him and took him by the shoulder. "You old reprobate," I roared, "if you breathe such a proposal to me again, I'll tie you up like a sack and carry you to Pietersdorp!"

At this he broke down and wept maudlin tears disgusting to witness. He said he was an old man who had always lived honestly, and it would break his heart if his gray hairs were to be disgraced.

"See here, Mr. Japp," I said, "I'm willing to keep you out of jail, but it must be on my own conditions. The first is that you resign this job and clear out. The second is that for the time you remain here the diamond business must utterly cease. The third condition is that when you leave this place you go clear away. If you come within twenty miles of Blaauwildebeestefontein, and I find you, I will give you up!"

He groaned and writhed at my terms, but in the end accepted them. Small wonder that the firm's business was not so good as it might be, when Japp was giving most of his time to buying diamonds from native thieves! The secret put him in the power of any Kaffir who traded him a stone.

Mr. Wardlaw had a spare room, which he had offered me before, and now I accepted it. I wanted to be no more mixed up with Japp than I could help, for I did not know what villainy he might let me in for. Moreover, I carried Zeeta with me, being ashamed to leave her at the mercy of the old bully.

THAT night I sat smoking with Mr. Wardlaw in his sitting-room, where a welcome fire burned. Wardlaw, as I have said, had read a lot about native history and was full of the doings of Chaka and Mosilikatse and Moshesh and the kings of old.

To-night as he sat and puffed in his armchair he was full of stories about a fellow called Mononotapa. It seems he was a great black emperor whom the Portuguese discovered about the sixteenth century. He lived to the north in Mashonaland, and had a mountain full of gold. The Portuguese did not make much of him, but they got his son and turned him into a priest.

"He must have been a big man, Davie. You know that the old ruins in Rhodesia, called Zimbabwe, were long believed to be Phenician in origin, but now it is certain that they were built by natives. I maintain that the men who could erect piles like that"—and he showed me a picture—"were something more than petty chiefs."

Mr. Wardlaw thought that we were underrating the capacity of the native. It was not his intelligence which he thought we underrated, but his dangerousness. His reasons, shortly, were these: There were nine of them to every white man; they were all, roughly speaking, of the same stock, with the same tribal beliefs; they had only just ceased being a warrior race with a powerful military discipline; and, most important, they lived round the rim of the high-veld plateau and, if they combined, could cut off the white man from the sea. I pointed out to him that it would be only a matter of time before we opened the road again. "Ay," he said, "but think of what would happen before then! Think of the lonely farms and the little *dorps* wiped out of the map! It would be a second and bloodier Indian Mutiny."

"I'm not saying it's likely," he went on, "but I maintain it's possible. Supposing a second Chaka turned up, who could get the different tribes to work together. It wouldn't be so very hard to smuggle in arms. Think of the long unwatched coast in Gazaland and Tongaland. If they got a leader with prestige enough to organize a crusade against the white man, I don't see what could prevent a rising."

"We should get wind of it in time to crush it at the start," I said.

"I'm not so sure. They are cunning fellows and have arts that we know nothing about. You have heard of native telepathy. They can send news over a thousand miles as quick as the telegraph, and we have no means of tapping the wires. If they ever combined they could keep it as secret as the grave. My houseboy might be in the rising, and I would never suspect it till one fine morning he cut my throat."

"But they would never find a leader. If there was some exiled prince of Chaka's blood, who came back, like Prince Charlie, to free his people, there might be danger; but their royalties are fat men with top-hats and old frock-coats."

Wardlaw admitted this, but said that

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there might be other kinds of leaders. Then he shook the ashes out of his pipe and leaned forward with a solemn face. "I'll admit the truth to you, Davie—I'm black afraid!"

"Whatever is the matter?" I asked. "Has anything happened?"

He shook his head. "Nothing I can put a name to. But I have a presentiment that some mischief is brewing in these hills! I feel it in my bones."

I confess I was startled by these words. You must remember that I had never given a hint of my suspicions to Mr. Wardlaw.

I tried to get at his evidence, but it was very little. He thought there were an awful lot of blacks about. "There's another thing," he said. "The native bairns have all left the school. I went to Majinje to find out what was up, and an old crone told me the place was full of bad men. I tell you, Davie, there's something brewing, and that something is not good for us!

CHAPTER VIII

THE DRUMS BEAT AT SUNSET

JAPP was drunk for the next day or two, and I had the business of the store to myself. As I have said, I was really scared, more out of a sense of impotence than from dread of actual danger. Things were happening around me which I could only dimly guess at, and I had no power to take one step in defense.

A change had come over the place during my absence. The natives had almost disappeared from sight. Except the few families living round Blaauwildebeestefontein, one never saw a native on the roads, and none came into the store. They were sticking close to their location, or else they had gone after some distant business.

If there were no natives on the road there were plenty in the bush. I had the impression, of which Wardlaw had spoken, that the native population of the countryside had suddenly been hugely increased. The woods were simply *hotching* with them. I was being spied on as before, but now there were so many at the business that they could not all conceal their tracks.

What perplexed me was that I had been left unmolested when I had gone to Umvelos', for, as I conjectured, the secret of the neighborhood, whatever it was, was probably connected with the Rooirand. Why, then, was I so closely watched in the harmless neighborhood of the store? The reason must be that the Rooirand was away from civilization, but Blaauwildebeestefontein was near the frontier. They wanted to see if I proposed to go to Pietersdorp or Wesselsburg and tell what I knew, and were clearly resolved that I should not. I laughed, I remember, thinking that they had forgotten the post-bag. But then I reflected that I knew nothing of what might be happening daily to the post-bag.

Next day nothing happened, save that my sense of loneliness increased. I felt that I was being hemmed in by barbarism and cut off in a ghoulish land from the succor of my own kind. I kept my courage up only by the necessity of presenting a brave face to Mr. Wardlaw, who was by this time in a very broken condition of nerves.

On the third day events moved decidedly faster. Japp was entirely sober and wonderfully quiet.

I was just sitting down to dinner with Mr. Wardlaw when I remembered that I had left my watch in my waistcoat behind the counter, and started to go back for it. But at the door I stopped short, for two horsemen had drawn up before the store.

One was a native with what I took to be saddle-bags; the other was a small, slim man with a sun-helmet, who was slowly dismounting. Something in the cut of his jib struck me as familiar. I slipped into the empty schoolroom and stared hard. It was my former shipmate, Henriques!

You may imagine that my curiosity ran to fever-heat. My first impulse was to march over for my waistcoat and make a third with Japp at the interview. Happily I reflected in time that Henriques knew my face. Besides, if I walked in boldly I would get no news.

My next idea was to slip in by the back to the room I had once lived in. But how was I to cross the road?

The upshot was that I got my glasses and turned them on the store. In the gloom of the interior Henriques was standing by the counter and apparently talking to Japp. I hugged my impatience. I would have given a hundred pounds to be snug in my old room with Japp thinking me out of the store.

Then Japp invited him to his bedroom; the game was now to be played beyond my ken. So I stole out at the back door and

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took to the thickest bush on the hillside. My notion was to cross the road half a mile down, and then to come swiftly up the edge of the water so as to effect a back entrance into the store.

In about a quarter of an hour I had reached the point I was making for and was in the scrub about ten yards off the road when the clatter of horses pulled me up again. Peeping out, I saw that it was my friend and his Kaffir follower, who were riding at a very good pace for the plains. Toilfully and crossly I returned on my tracks to my long-delayed dinner. Whatever the purport of their talk, Japp and the Portuguese had not taken long over it.

In the store that afternoon I said casually to Japp that I had noticed visitors at the door during my dinner-hour. The old man looked me frankly enough in the face. "Yes, it was Mr. Hendricks," he said, and explained that the man was a Portuguese trader from Delagoa way who had a lot of Kaffir stores east of the Lebombo Hills. I asked his business and was told that he always gave Japp a call in when he was passing.

"Do you take every man that calls into your bedroom and shut the door?" I asked.

Japp lost color and his lip trembled. "I swear to God, Mr. Crawfurd, I've been doing nothing wrong: I've kept the promise I gave you like an oath to my mother. I'll be quite honest with you. I have dealt in diamonds before this with Hendricks. But to-day when he asked me I told him that that business was off. I only took him to my room to give him a drink."

"Had the man any news?" I asked.

"He had and he hadn't," said Japp. "He was always a sullen beggar and never spoke much. But he said one queer thing. He asked me if I were going to retire, and when I told him yes, he said I had put it off rather long. I told him I was as healthy as I ever was, and he laughed in his dirty Portuguese way. 'Yes, Mr. Japp,' he says, 'but the country is not so healthy.' I wonder what the chap meant! He'll be dead of black-water before many months, to judge by his eyes."

This talk satisfied me about Japp, who was clearly in desperate fear of offending me and disinclined to return for the present to his old ways. But I think the rest of the afternoon was the most wretched time in my existence. It was as plain as daylight that we were in for some grave trouble,—trouble to which I believed that I alone held any kind of clue. I had a pile of evidence—the visit of Henriques was the last bit—which pointed to some great secret approaching its disclosure. I thought that that disclosure meant blood and ruin. But I knew nothing definite. If the commander of a British army had come to me then and there and offered help I could have done nothing, only ask him to wait like me.

The peril, whatever it was, did not threaten me only, though I and Wardlaw and Japp might be the first to suffer. I cursed myself for not writing to Aitken at Lorenzo Marques weeks before. He had promised to come up, and he was the kind of man who kept his word.

IN THE late afternoon I dragged Wardlaw out for a walk. We took a path up the Berg among thickets of stinkwood and essenwood, where a falling stream made an easy route. It may have been fancy, but it seemed to me that the wood was emptier and that we were followed less closely. When we stood on the edge of the plateau, we saw the sun sinking between two far blue peaks in Makapan's Country, and away to the south the great roll of the high-veld.

As we gazed a curious sound struck our ears. It seemed to begin far up in the north—a low roll like the combing of breakers on the sand. Then it grew louder and traveled nearer—a roll, with sudden spasms of harsher sound in it, reminding me of the churning in one of the pot-holes of Kirkcaple cliffs. I have never heard an eerier sound. Neither natural nor human it seemed, but the voice of that world between, which is hid from man's sight and hearing.

Mr. Wardlaw clutched my arm and in that moment I guessed the explanation. The native drums were beating, passing some message from the far north down the line of the Berg, where the locations were thickest, to the great black populations of the south.

"But that means war!" Mr. Wardlaw cried.

"It means nothing of the kind," I said shortly. "It's their way of sending news. It's as likely to be some change in the weather or an outbreak of cattle disease."

When we got home I found Japp with a

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face like gray paper. "Did you hear the drums?" he asked.

"Yes," I said shortly, "and what about them?"

"God forgive you for an ignorant Britisher!" he almost shouted. "You may hear drums any night, but a drumming like that I only once heard before! It was in '79 in the 'Zeti Valley. Do you know what happened next day? Cetewayo's *impis* came over the hills, and in an hour there wasn't a living white soul in the glen! Two men escaped, and one of them was called Peter Japp."

"We are in God's hands, then, and must wait on His will," I said solemnly.

THERE was no more sleep for Wardlaw and myself that night. We made the best barricade we could of the windows, loaded all our weapons and trusted to Colin to give us early news. Before supper I went over to get Japp to join us, but found that that worthy had sought help from his old protector, the bottle, and was already sound asleep with both door and window open.

I had made up my mind that death was certain, and yet my heart belied my conviction and I could not feel the appropriate mood. If anything, I was more cheerful since I had heard the drums. It was clearly now beyond the power of me or any man to stop the march of events.

I wakened at eight to find that nothing had happened. The clear morning sunlight, as of old, made Blaauwildebeestefontein the place of a dream. Zeeta brought in my cup of coffee as if this day were just like all others, my pipe tasted as sweet, the fresh air from the Berg blew as fragrantly on my brow. I went over to the store in reasonably good spirits, leaving Wardlaw busy on the penitential psalms.

The post-runner had brought the mail as usual, and there was one private letter for me. I opened it with great excitement, for the envelope bore the stamp of the firm. At last Colles had deigned to answer!

Inside was a sheet of the firm's notepaper with the signature of Colles across the top. Below, some one had penciled these five words:

The blesbok are changing ground.

I looked to see that Japp had not suffocated himself, then shut up the store and went back to my room to think out this new mystification. There was Colles's signature, but the penciling was in a different hand. My deduction from this was that some one wished to send me a message, and that Colles had given that some one a sheet of paper, signed, to serve as a kind of introduction. I might take it, therefore, that the scribble was Colles's reply to my letter.

If the unknown person saw fit to send me a message, it could not be merely one of warning. Colles must have told him that I was awake to some danger, and, as I was in Blaauwildebeestefontein, I must be nearer the heart of things than any one else. The message must therefore be in the nature of some password which I was to remember when I heard it again.

I felt no more the crushing isolation of yesterday. There were others besides me in the secret. Help must be on the way, and the letter was the first tidings. But how near? That was the question; and it occurred to me to look at the postmark. I went back to the store and got the envelope out of the waste-paper basket. There was no mark of the post-town of delivery.

It was some minutes before the explanation flashed on me—the letter had never been posted at all! The stamp was a fake, and had been borrowed from an old letter! It must have been put in the letter-bag while the postman was on his way from Pietersdorp. My unknown friend must therefore be somewhere within eighty miles of me.

That afternoon I again took Mr. Wardlaw for a walk. It is an ingrained habit of mine that I never tell any one more of a business than is practically necessary, but I thought it my duty to tell Wardlaw about the letter, but I am afraid it did not encourage his mind.

We took the same road to the crown of the Berg. When we reached the summit about sunset we waited anxiously for the sound of drums. It came, as we expected, louder and more menacing than before. Wardlaw stood pinching my arm as the great tattoo swept down the escarpment and died away in the far mountains beyond the Olifants. Yet it no longer seemed to be a wall of sound, shutting us out from our kindred in the West. A message had pierced the wall. If the *blesbok* were chan-

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ging ground, I believed the hunters were calling out their dogs and getting ready for the chase.

CHAPTER IX

CAPTAIN ARCOLL TELLS A TALE

AS I CROSSED the road next morning my mind was strung high with expectation. Five penciled words may seem a small thing to build hope on, but I went about my work with a reasonably light heart. One of the first things I did was to take stock of our armory. There were five sporting Mausers of a cheap make, one Mauser pistol, a Lee-Speed carbine, and a little nickel-plated revolver. There was also Japp's shotgun, an old hammered breech-loader. There was a good supply of cartridges, including a stock for a .400 express which could not be found. I pocketed the pistol, and searched till I discovered a good sheath-knife.

After dinner I must have fallen asleep over a pipe, for, the next thing I knew, I was blinking drowsily at the patch of sun in the door and listening for footsteps.

But it was only a Kaffir, and a miserable-looking object at that. I had never seen such an anatomy! It was a very old man, bent almost double, and clad in a ragged shirt and a pair of foul khaki trousers. He carried an iron pot, and a few belongings were tied up in a dirty handkerchief. He must have been a *dacha*-smoker, for he coughed hideously, twisting his body with the paroxysms.

He gave me good-day in Kaffir, then begged for tobacco or a handful of mealie-meal. I asked him where he came from.

"From the west, *inkoos*," he said, "and before that from the south. It is a sore road for old bones."

I went into the store to fetch some meal, and when I came out he had shuffled close to the door.

"The nights are cold, *inkoos*," he wailed, "and my folk are scattered and I have no *kraal*. The *aasvogels* follow me, and I can hear the *blesbok*."

"What about the *blesbok?*" I asked with a start.

"The *blesbok* are changing ground!" he said, and looked me straight in the face.

"And where are the hunters?" I asked.

"They are here and behind me," he said in English, holding out his pot for my meal, while he began to edge into the middle of the road.

I followed and, speaking English, asked him if he knew of a man named Colles.

"I come from him, young *baas*. Where is your house? Ah, the school! There will be a way in by the back window? See that it is open, for I'll be there shortly!" Then lifting up his voice he called down in Sesutu all manner of blessings on me for my kindness, and went shuffling down the sunlit road, coughing like a volcano.

In high excitement I locked up the store and went over to Mr. Wardlaw.

IN ABOUT twenty minutes the bush below the back-window parted and the Kaffir slipped out. He grinned at me, and, after a glance round, hopped over the sill. Then he examined the window and pulled the curtains.

"Is the outer door shut?" he asked in excellent English. "Well, get me some hot water and any spare clothes you may possess, Mr. Crawfurd. I must get comfortable before we begin our *indada*. We've the night before us, so there's plenty of time."

I brought him what he wanted, and looked on at an amazing transformation. Taking a vial from his bundle, he rubbed some liquid on his face and neck and hands and got rid of the black coloring. Then he pulled off a scaly wig, and showed beneath it a head of close-cropped, grizzled hair. In ten minutes the old Kaffir had been transformed into an active, soldierly-looking man of maybe fifty years. Mr. Wardlaw stared as if he had seen a resurrection.

"I had better introduce myself," said our visitor, when he had taken the edge off his thirst and hunger. "My name is Arcoll, Captain James Arcoll. I am speaking to Mr. Crawfurd, the storekeeper, and Mr. Wardlaw, the schoolmaster, of Blaauwildebeestefontein. Where, by the way, is Mr. Peter Japp? Drunk? Ah, yes, it was always his failing. The quorum, however, is complete without him."

By this time it was about sunset, and I remember I cocked my ear to hear the drums beat. Captain Arcoll noticed the movement, as he noticed all else. "You're listening for the drums, but you won't hear them. To-night they beat in Swaziland and down into the Tonga border. Three

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days more, unless you and I are extra smart, they'll be hearing them in Durban."

It was not till the lamp was lit, the fire burning well and the house locked and shuttered that Captain Arcoll began.

"First," he said, "let me hear what you know. Colles told me that you were a keen fellow and had wind of some mystery here. You wrote, but I told him to take no notice. Your affair, Mr. Crawfurd, had to wait on more urgent matters. Now, what do you think is happening?"

I spoke very shortly, weighing my words, for I felt I was on trial before those bright eyes. "I think that some kind of native rising is about to commence."

"Ay," he said dryly, "you would, and your evidence would be the spying and drumming. Anything more?"

"I have come on the tracks of a lot of I. D. B. works in the neighborhood. The natives have some supply of diamonds, which they sell bit by bit, and I don't doubt that they have been getting guns with the proceeds."

He nodded. "Have you any notion who has been engaged in the job?"

I had it on my tongue to mention Japp, but forbore, remembering my promise. "I can name one," I said, "a little yellow Portuguese, who calls himself Henriques or Hendricks. He passed by here the day before yesterday."

Captain Arcoll suddenly was consumed with quiet laughter. "Did you notice the Kaffir who rode with him and carried his saddle-bags? Well, he's one of my men. Henriques would have a fit if he knew what was in those saddle-bags. They contain my change of clothes and other odds and ends. Henriques' own stuff is in a hole in the *spruit*." And again Captain Arcoll indulged his sense of humor. Then he became grave and returned to his examination: "But who is to lead, and what are the natives going to rise about?"

"I know nothing further, but I have made some guesses."

"Let's hear your guesses," he said, blowing smoke-rings from his pipe.

"I think the main mover is a great black minister, who calls himself John Laputa."

Captain Arcoll nearly sprang out of his chair. "Now how on earth did you find *that* out? Quick, Mr. Crawfurd! tell me all you know, for this is desperately important!"

I began at the beginning and Captain Arcoll listened intently. At the mention of Durban he laughed. "I thought I had grabbed my friend Laputa that night in Durban, but I was too cock-sure and he slipped off. When did you say you saw him at his devil-worship? Seven years ago? Then you were the first man alive to know the Reverend John in his true colors! You knew seven years ago what I found out only last year!"

"Well, that's my story," I said. "There's one other thing I can tell you. There's some kind of sacred place for the Kaffirs, and I've found out where it is." I gave him a short account of my adventures on the Rooirand.

He smoked silently for a bit after I had finished. "You've got the skeleton of the whole thing right, and you only want the filling up. Colles was right; you're not wanting in intelligence, Mr. Crawfurd."

It was not much of a compliment, but I have never been more pleased in my life. This slim, grizzled man with his wrinkled face and bright eyes was clearly not lavish in his praise.

"AND now I will tell you my story," said Captain Arcoll. "It has taken me years to decipher it and, remember, I've been all my life at this native business. I can talk every dialect and I have the customs of every tribe by heart. I've traveled over every mile of South Africa, and Central and East Africa, too. I was in both the Matabele Wars, and I've seen a heap of other fighting which never got into the papers. So what I tell you you can take as gospel, for it is knowledge that was not learned in a day."

He puffed away and then asked suddenly: "Did you ever hear of Prester John?"

"The man that lived in Central Asia?" I asked with a reminiscence of a story-book I had as a boy.

"No, no!" said Mr. Wardlaw. "He means the king of Abyssinia in the fifteenth century. He was a Christian, and the Portuguese sent expedition after expedition to find him, but they never got there. Albuquerque wanted to make an alliance with him and capture the Holy Sepulcher."

Arcoll nodded. "That's the one I mean. He was a sort of Christian, but I expect that his practises were as pagan as his neighbors'. There is no doubt that he was a great con-

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queror. Under him and his successors the empire of Ethiopia extended far south of Abyssinia away down to the Great Lakes."

"How long did this power last?" I asked, wondering to what tale this was prologue.

"That's a mystery no scholar has ever been able to fathom. Anyhow, the center of authority began to shift southward, and the warrior tribes moved in that direction. At the end of the sixteenth century the chief native power was round about the Zambesi. The Mazimba and the Makalaka had come down from the Lake Nyassa quarter, and there was a strong kingdom in Manicaland. That was the Mononotapa that the Portuguese thought so much of.

"The thing to remember is that all these little empires thought themselves the successors of Prester John. It took me a long time to find this out, and I have spent days with the best scholars in Europe over it. They all looked back to a great king in the north, whom they called by about twenty different names. They had forgotten all about his Chistianity, but they remembered that he was a conqueror.

"Well, to make a long story short, Mononotapa disappeared in time, and fresh tribes came down from the north and pushed right down to Natal and the Cape. That is how the Zulus first appeared. They brought with them the story of Prester John, but by this time it had ceased to be a historical memory and had become a religious cult. They worshiped a great Power who had been their ancestor, and the favorite Zulu word for him was Umkulunkulu. The belief was perverted into fifty different forms, but this was the central creed—that Umkulunkulu had been the father of the tribe and was alive as a spirit to watch over them.

"They brought more than a creed with them. Somehow or other some fetish had descended from Prester John by way of the Mazimba and Angoni and Makelaka. What it is I do not know, but it was always in the hands of the tribe which for the moment held the leadership. Anyhow we know that the Zulus brought it down with them. They called it by a name which means the Great Snake, but I don't suppose that it was any kind of snake. The snake was their totem, and they would naturally call their most sacred possession after it.

"Now I will tell you a thing that few know. You have heard of Chaka. He was a sort of black Napoleon early in the last century, and he made the Zulus the paramount power in South Africa, slaughtering about two million souls to accomplish it. Well, he had the fetish, whatever it was, and it was believed that he owed his conquests to it. Mosilikatse tried to steal it, and that was why he had to fly to Matabeleland. But with Chaka it disappeared. Dingaan did not have it, nor Panda, and Cetewayo never got it, though he searched the length and breadth of the country for it. It had gone out of existence, and with it the chance of a Kaffir empire."

CHAPTER X

AN IDEA AND A RESOLUTION

CAPTAIN ARCOLL got up to light his pipe, and I noticed that his face was grave. He was not telling us this yarn for our amusement.

"In spite of risings here and there and occasional rows, the Kaffirs have been quiet for the better part of half a century. It is no credit to us. They have had plenty of grievances, and we are no nearer understanding them than our fathers were. But they are scattered and divided. We have driven great wedges of white settlement into their territory, and we have taken away their arms. Still, they are nine times as many as we are, and they have long memories, and a thoughtful man may wonder how long the peace will last. Till lately I used to reply, 'Forever, because they can not find a leader with the proper authority, and they have no common cause to fight for.' But a year or two ago I began to change my mind.

"One day I came on the tracks of a curious person. He was a Christian minister, called Laputa, and he was going among the tribes from Durban to the Zambesi as a roving evangelist. I found that he made an enormous impression, and yet the people I spoke to were chary of saying much about him. Presently I found that he preached more than the Gospel. His word was "Africa for the Africans," and his chief point was that the natives had had a great empire in the past and might have a great empire again. He used to tell the story of Prester John with all kinds of embroidery of his own. You see, Prester John was a

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good argument for him, for he had been a Christian as well as a great potentate.

"I first came across him at a revival meeting in London, where he was a great success. The next time I met him was on the lower Limpopo, when I had the honor of trying to shoot him from a boat."

CAPTAIN ARCOLL took his pipe from his mouth and laughed at the recollection. "I had got on to an I. D. B. gang, and to my amazement found the evangelist among them. But the Reverend John was too much for me. He went overboard, in spite of the crocodiles, and managed to swim below water to the reed-bed at the side. However, that was a valuable experience for me, for it gave me a clue.

"I next saw him at a missionary conference in Cape Town and after that at a meeting of the Geographical Society in London, where I had a long talk with him. He had been educated in the States, and well educated too, for the man is a fine scholar and a great reader, besides the finest natural orator I have ever heard. There was no doubt that he was of Zulu blood, but I could get no traces of his family.

"In his excursions into civilization he was merely the educated Kaffir, a great pet of missionary societies, and a favorite speaker at church meetings. You will find evidence given by him in Blue-Books on native affairs, and he counted many members of Parliament at home among his correspondents. I let that side go and resolved to dog him when on his evangelizing tours in the back-veld.

"He never knew who was the broken-down old Kaffir who squatted in the dirt at the edge of the crowd when he spoke, or the half-caste who called him 'Sir' and drove his Cape-cart. I had some queer adventures, but these can wait. The gist of the thing is that after six months which turned my hair gray I got a glimmering of what he was after. He talked Christianity to the mobs in the *kraals*, but to the *indunas* he told a different story."

Captain Arcoll helped himself to a drink. "You can guess what that story was, Mr. Crawfurd. At full moon when the black cock had been blooded, the Reverend John forgot his Christianity. He was back four centuries among the Mazimba, sweeping down on the Zambesi. He told them, and they believed him, that he was the Umkulunkulu, the incarnated spirit of Prester John. He told them that he was there to lead the African race to conquest and empire. Ay, and he told them more; for, he has, or says he has, the Great Snake itself, the necklet of Prester John!

"Now that I knew his purpose I set myself to work in earnest to find out his preparations. It was not long before I found a mighty organization at work from the Zambesi to the Cape. The great tribes were up to their necks in the conspiracy, and all manner of little sects had been taken in. I have sat at tribal councils and been sworn a blood-brother, and I have used the secret password to get knowledge in odd places. It was a dangerous game and, as I have said, I had my adventures, but I came safe out of it—with my knowledge for reward.

"The first thing I found out was that there was a great deal of wealth somewhere among the tribes. Much of it was in diamonds, which the laborers stole from the mines and the chiefs impounded. Nearly every tribe had its secret chest, and our friend Laputa had the use of them all. Of course the difficulty was changing the diamonds into coin, and he had to start I. D. B. on a big scale. Your pal, Henriques, was the chief agent for this, but he had others at Mozambique and Johannesburg, ay, and in London.

"With the money, guns and ammunition were bought. You ask what the Governments were doing to let this go on. They were all asleep. They never dreamed of danger from the natives, and in any case it was difficult to police the Portuguese side. Laputa knew our weakness, and he staked everything on it.

"My first scheme was to lay Laputa by the heels. But no Government would act on my information. The man was strongly buttressed by public support at home. For five months he and Henriques have been lying low because their scheme was getting very ripe. For a month I have never been more than five hours behind him on the trail, and if he has laid his train, I have laid mine also."

Acroll's whimsical, humorous face had hardened into grimness, and in his clear eyes there was the light of a fierce purpose. The sight of him comforted me in spite of his tale.

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"But what can he hope to do?" I asked. "Though he roused every Kaffir in South Africa he would be beaten."

"I said he was an educated man, but he is also a Kaffir. He can see the first stage of a thing, and maybe the second, but no more. That is the native mind."

"You say the scheme is ripe," I said. "How ripe?"

Arcoll looked at the clock. "In half an hour's time Laputa will be with Mpefu. There he will stay the night. To-morrow morning he goes to Umvelos' to meet Henriques. To-morrow evening the gathering begins."

"One question," I said. "How big a man is Laputa?"

"The biggest thing that the Kaffirs have ever produced. I tell you, in my opinion he is a great genius. If he had been white he might have been a second Napoleon. He is a born leader of men, and as brave as a lion. There is no villainy he would not do if necessary, and yet I should hesitate to call him a blackguard. Ay, you may look surprised at me, you two pragmatical Scotsmen, but I have, so to speak, lived with the man for months, and there's fineness and nobility in him. He would be a terrible enemy, but a just one. He has the heart of a poet and a king, and it is God's curse that he has been born among the children of Ham. I hope to shoot him like a dog in a day or two, but I am glad to bear testimony to his greatness."

"If the rising starts to-morrow," I asked, "have you any of his plans?"

He picked up a map from the table and opened it. "The first rendezvous is somewhere near Sikitola's. Then they move south, picking up contingents, and the final concentration is to be on the high-veld near Amsterdam, which is convenient for the Swazis and the Zulus. Now, look here. To get to Amsterdam they must cross the Delagoa Bay Railway. Well, they won't be allowed to. If they get that far, they will be scattered there.

"We have the police ready all along the scarp of the Berg. Every exit from native territory is watched, and the frontier farmers are out on *commando*. We have regulars on the Delagoa Bay and Natal lines, and a system of field telegraphs laid which can summon further troops to any point. It has all been kept secret, because we are still in the dark ourselves, but in two days every white household in South Africa will be in a panic.

"Make no mistake, Mr. Crawfurd. This is a grim business. We shall smash Laputa and his men, but it will be a fierce fight, and there will be much good blood shed. Besides, it will throw the country back another half-century. Would to God I were man enough to put a bullet through his head in cold blood! But I could not do it; it was too like murder; and maybe I shall never have the chance now."

"There's one thing puzzles me," I said. "What makes Laputa come up here, to start with? Why didn't he begin with Zululand?"

"God knows! There's sure to be sense in it, for he does nothing without reason. We may know to-morrow."

BUT, as Captain Arcoll spoke, the real reason suddenly flashed into my mind—Laputa had to get the Great Snake, the necklet of Prester John, to give his leadership prestige. Apparently he had not yet got it, or Arcoll would have known. He started from this neighborhood because the fetish was somewhere hereabouts. I was convinced that my guess was right, but I kept my own counsel.

"To-morrow Laputa and Henriques meet at Umvelos', probably at your new store, Mr. Crawfurd. And so the ball commences."

My resolution was suddenly taken. "I think," I said, "I had better be present at the meeting, as representing the firm."

Captain Arcoll stared at me and laughed. "I had thought of going myself," he said.

"Then you go to certain death, disguise yourself as you please. Besides, you can not meet them in the store, as I can. I'm there on my ordinary business, and they will never suspect. If you're to get any news, I'm the man to go."

He looked at me steadily for a minute or so. "I'm not sure that's such a bad idea of yours! I would be better employed myself on the Berg, and, as you say, I would have little chance of hearing anything. You're a plucky fellow, Mr. Crawfurd. I suppose you understand that the risk is pretty considerable?"

"I suppose I do, but since I'm in this thing I may as well see it out. Besides, I've an old quarrel with our friend Laputa."

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"Good and well!" said Captain Arcoll. "I'll explain to you the disposition of my men."

Till midnight we pored over maps till certain details were burned on my memory. Then we went to bed and slept soundly, even Mr. Wardlaw. It was strange how fear had gone from the establishment now that we knew the worst and had a fighting man by our side.

CHAPTER .XI

I FALL IN AGAIN WITH THE REVEREND JOHN LAPUTA

NOW that I was only one wheel in a great machine of defense my nervousness seemed to have fled. I was well aware that the mission I was bound on was full of risk, but one thing only I regretted—that Tam Dyke was not with me to see the fun. As I shaved, I remember wondering if I would ever shave again, and the thought gave me no tremors. For once in my sober life I was strung up to the gambler's pitch of adventure.

My job was to go to Umvelos' as if on my ordinary business, and if possible find out something of the evening's plan of march. The question was how to send back a message to Arcoll, assuming I had any difficulty in getting away. At first this puzzled us both, and then I thought of Colin, for I had trained the dog to go home at my bidding.

I asked about Laputa's knowledge of our preparations. Arcoll was inclined to think that he suspected little. He thought that all the bush country of the plain would be closely watched, and that no one would get through without some kind of pass. But he thought also that the storekeeper might be an exception. Almost his last words to me were to come back hell-for-leather if I saw the game was hopeless, and in any case to leave as soon as I got any news. "If you're there when the march begins," he said, "they'll cut your throat for a certainty."

I said good-by to Arcoll and Wardlaw with a light heart, though the schoolmaster broke down and implored me to think better of it. As I turned down into the gorge I heard the sound of horses' feet far behind, and, turning back, saw white riders dismounting at the *dorp*. At any rate I was leaving the country well guarded in my rear.

It was a fine morning in midwinter, and I was in very good spirits as I jogged on my pony down the steep hill-road with Colin running beside me. I had not gone far before I realized that something strange was going on. I had the impression of many people moving in the bush, and now and then I caught a glimpse of them. My first thought was that I should be stopped, but soon it appeared that these folk had other business.

For a little I kept my spirits, but as the hours passed with the same uncanny hurrying to and fro all about me, my nerves began to suffer. I felt odd quiverings between my shoulder-blades where a spear might be expected to lodge, and I began to wish heartily I had never come.

I stopped for my midday meal at a place called Taqui, a grassy glade in the bush where a tiny spring of water crept out from below a big stone only to disappear in the sand. Here I sat and smoked for half an hour, wondering what was going to become of me. So nervous I got that I took my pocketbook and wrote down certain messages to my mother, which I implored whoever should find my body to transmit. Then, a little ashamed of my childishness, I pulled myself together, and remounted.

ABOUT three in the afternoon I came over a low ridge of bush and saw the corrugated iron roof of the store and the gleam of water from the Lobonga. I had forgotten for a moment the folk in the bush, and when a man stepped out of the thicket I pulled up my horse with a start.

It was a tall native, who carried himself proudly, and, after a glance at me, stalked along at my side. He wore curious clothes, for he had a kind of linen tunic, and around his waist hung a kilt of leopard-skin. In such a man one would have looked for a *ringkop*, but instead he had a mass of hair, not like a Kaffir's wool, but long and curled like some popular musician's. I should have been prepared for the face, but the sight of it sent a sudden chill of fright through my veins. For there were the curved nose, the deep flashing eyes and the cruel lips of my enemy of the Kirkcaple shore!

Colin was suspicious and followed his heels, growling, but he never turned his head

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"The day is warm, father," I said in Kaffir. "Do you go far?"

He slackened pace till he was at my elbow. "But a short way, *baas*," he said in English, "I go to the store yonder."

"Well met, then," said I, "for I am the storekeeper. You will find little in it, for it is newly built and not yet stocked. I have ridden over to see to it."

He turned his face to me. "That is bad news. I had hoped for food and drink yonder. I have traveled far, and in the chill nights I desire a cover for my head. Will the *baas* allow me to sleep the night in an outhouse?"

By this time I had recovered my nerve, and was ready to play the part I had determined on. "Willingly," I said. "You may sleep in the storeroom if you care to."

He thanked me with a grave dignity which I had never seen in any Kaffir. As my eye fell on his splendid proportions I forgot all else in my admiration of the man. In his minister's clothes he had looked only a heavily-built native; but now in his savage dress I saw how noble a figure he made. He must have been at least six feet and a half, but his chest was so deep and his shoulders so massive that one did not remark his height. He put a hand on my saddle, and I remember noting how slim and fine it was—more like a high-bred woman's than a man's. Curiously enough he filled me with a certain confidence. "I do not think you will cut my throat," I said to myself. "Your game is too big for common murder."

THE store at Umvelos' stood as I had left it. I showed him the outhouse where I had said he might sleep. A pile of barrels and packing-cases stood in the corner, and there was enough sacking to make a sort of bed.

"I am going to make tea," I said. "If you have come far you would like a cup?"

He thanked me and I made a fire in the grate and put on the kettle to boil. Then I set on the table biscuits and sardines and a pot of jam. It was my business now to play the fool, and I believe I succeeded to admiration in the part. I blush to-day to think of the stuff I talked. First I made him sit on a chair opposite me, a thing no white man in the country would have done. Then I told him affectionately that I liked natives, that they were fine fellows and better men than the dirty whites round about. I explained that I was fresh from England, and believed in equal rights for all men, white or colored. God forgive me, but I think I said I hoped to see the day when Africa would belong once more to its rightful masters!

He heard me with an impassive face, his grave eyes studying every line of me. He must have thought me half-witted, and indeed before long I began to be of the same opinion myself. I told him that I meant to sleep the night here, and go back in the morning to Blaauwildebeestefontein, and then to Pietersdorp for stores.

By and by I could see that he had ceased to pay any attention to what I said. I was clearly set down in his mind as a fool. Instead he kept looking at Colin, who was lying blinking in the doorway, one wary eye locked on the stranger.

"You have a fine dog," he observed.

"Yes," I agreed, with one final effort of mendacity, "he's fine to look at, but he's no grit in him. Any mongrel from a *kraal* can make him turn tail. Besides, he is a born fool and can't find his way home. I'm thinking of getting rid of him."

Laputa rose and his eye fell on the dog's back. I could see that he saw the lie of the coat, and that he did not agree with me.

"The food was welcome, *baas*," he said. "If you will listen to me I can repay hospitality with advice. You are a stranger here. Trouble comes, and if you are wise you will go back to the Berg."

"I don't know what you mean," I said with an air of cheerful idiocy. "But back to the Berg I go the first thing in the morning. I hate these stinking plains."

"It were wise to go to-night," he said, with a touch of menace in his tone.

"I can't," I said, and began to sing the chorus of a ridiculous music-hall song:

> "There's no place like home—but
> I'm afraid to go home in the dark."

Laputa shrugged his shoulders, stepped over the bristling Colin, and went out. When I looked after him two minutes later he had disappeared.

TO BE CONTINUED

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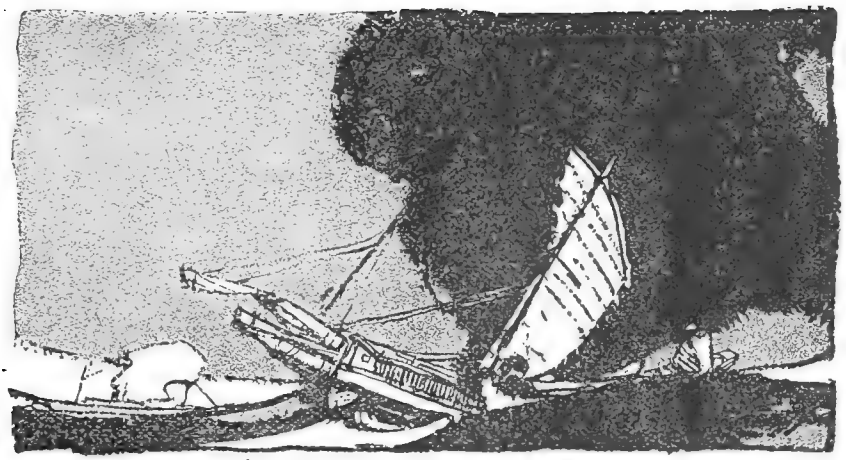

Looking for Trouble

Real Stories from the Life of a Master Adventurer by Captain George B. Boynton

EDITOR'S NOTE—Captain George B. Boynton is not the creation of a writer's imagination. His exploits have many times been fictionized, but the man himself is real and still living, though now settled in quiet city life after half a century of thrilling activity. Even yet more than one foreign Power takes pains to keep carefully informed of his exact whereabouts, for he has been one of those who, as revolutionist, filibuster, blockade-runner, counselor of South American dictators, soldier of fortune, has a hundred times shown himself an elusive element to be reckoned with in the great game of world-politics. He has served, all told, under eighteen flags—in Europe, the West Indies, the Caribbean, North and South America, the China seas—everywhere and anywhere that mankind was at war and there was promise of excitement and adventure. His life has furnished much material for fiction, but now, for the first time, Captain Boynton tells his own story, its truth attested alike by internal evidence and affidavit. and fiction pales beside it. For several months ADVENTURE will publish adventures, each complete in itself, from the career of this Master Adventurer.

THE CHINA SEAS

PIRATES AMONG PIRATES

IT WAS in the Summer of 1874 that I made my first plunge into piracy, for, with all of the trimmings and aids to deception stripped away, that was what it really amounted to. I did not know into just what I was being led when I embarked in this new enterprise, but I am frank to say that it would have made no difference, for a free translation of the word "piracy" is "adventure of the first order," and that was what I was looking for.

When I reached London, after my strange escape from execution in Santo Domingo and my exploration of the headwaters of the Orinoco, Frank Norton was coming up from the Mediterranean with the *Leckwith*, carrying a general cargo, and I had not long to wait for him. He was joyous when I told him I was ready to accompany him to the China Sea, which he had pictured as an El Dorado of excitement.

Norton said we would need the *Leckwith* and two ships to carry on the business to the best advantage, so I selected the *Surprise*, an American brig, and the *Florence*, a topsail schooner, both stout, fast ships. I put Lorensen on the *Leckwith* as sailing-master, George Brown on the *Surprise*, and old Bill Heather on the *Florence*. The *Surprise* took on a general cargo for Japan and was ordered to rendezvous at Hong Kong, while the *Florence* loaded for Singapore. Norton and I followed in the *Leckwith*. Two brass cannon were mounted in place of the yacht's guns and we took on board four small carronades, a French mitrailleuse and several hundred rifles, cutlasses and side-arms, with an abundance of ammunition, all of which were stored in the hold.

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Before our departure I had printed on parchment, in exact imitation of the genuine, certificates of registry in English, Dutch, German, French and Spanish, and seals made to correspond to them. I also had certificates of health, consular clearances and bills of health, custom-house clearances and shipping certificates printed in different languages. Forged service certificates were also issued to old men of long service who were competent officers but could not pass the technical examinations provided for in the amended maritime laws.

These and the certificates of registry were aged with a solution of iron and, if necessary, rubbed on the cabin floor to add to their years. With these papers I could give a ship a registry under any flag and make it appear that she had come from any port that suited my purpose. They were signed with an illegible scrawl, as are the genuine.

To complicate matters further the *Lockwith* was supplied with a telescopic smokestack which, when lowered, was completely hidden. She was schooner rigged and could be transformed into a fore-and-aft schooner by dousing the stack and housing the yards on the foremast; or into a brig by putting yards on the mainmast. Similar changes of rig could be made on the *Florence* and *Surprise*. I never used a ship on which this could not be done. The efficacy of these precautions is proved by the fact that I never lost a cargo of contraband.

On the long trip out I whiled away the time in an effort to evolve a torpedo of a new type, and before the end of the trip I had developed a torpedo that I regarded as perfection and which I afterward used with success, though it finally got me into trouble in South America.

WE REACHED Singapore more than a month ahead of the *Florence*. Our scheme was to prey on the pirates who infested the China Sea, and particularly that part of it lying between Singapore, Sumatra and Borneo, which was dotted with islands and beautifully suited by nature to their plundering profession, and many were the good ships that ended their cruises there, along with their passengers and crews. The British Government had been trying for years to put an end to their operations, but the undertaking was a gigantic one. It was not until years after that it was officially announced that piracy had been suppressed, and piracy is still being carried on, even to this day, though in a small and desultory way.

The pirates were chiefly Chinese, with a considerable number of Malays and some Dyaks. As to bravery and bloodthirstiness there was little choice among them. They were all desperate villains, and their thirst for gold was exceeded only by their true Oriental cunning. When they fell from wounds they would watch for an opportunity to hamstring their opponents or disembowel them with their long, crooked knives. After we discovered this devilish trait no quarter was ever shown them. When one of them fell he was shot through the head or stabbed to make sure that he would do no further harm.

The Chinese operated chiefly in large junks, with which they could go well out to sea. Most of them carried guns of considerable size, while all of them were supplied with a multitude of stink-pots, which were their favorite weapons. These were round, earthenware pots, twelve or fifteen inches in diameter, filled with a black mixture of the consistency of moist earth which was lighted just before the missile was thrown. They were handled in a sling and could be thrown with great accuracy for one hundred feet or more. When the pot struck the opposing ship it broke open and the contents spread out on the deck, giving off a thick, pungent and vile-smelling smoke which would quickly produce complete asphyxiation if inhaled at close range. If the smoking mass was left long enough undisturbed, it would set fire to the ship. The pirates themselves were largely immune to this horrible smoke, and under its cover, following a rain of stink-pots, they would board a ship almost unseen, and have her defenders, whom they always outnumbered, at a great disadvantage from the start.

When fighting at close quarters the Chinese used long, curved swords, something like a Turkish yataghan, while the Malays were armed with the kris, a short, double-edged sword with serrated edges. Both were murderous weapons, and the pirates were graduated experts in the use of them; in fact, they preferred their butcher-knives to firearms, for they were miserable marksmen. As soon as an engagement became

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general they would throw away their guns and pistols, and use their swords with both hands, striking powerful, chopping blows.

The Malays and Dyaks used proas or feluccas, light, strong, low-lying vessels. They were rigged with two large lateen sails and were very fast. The proas were supplied with long sweeps with which they could be driven along at a fair rate of speed when there was no wind. The junks were used for outside work, while the proas and feluccas kept close inshore.

IT WAS this ease of escape, and the fact that unless they were caught red-handed conviction was impossible, which combined to make the stamping out of the pirates such a tremendous task. The junks always carried just enough cargo to enable them to pose, technically, as peaceful traders and, with the aid of their friends afloat and ashore, they could easily prove an alibi, or anything else that was needed. When closely pursued by a suspicious warship and certain to be overhauled and inspected, they would throw overboard their surplus of arms and, if necessary, any loot they happened to have on board, to remove all incriminating evidence. Thus it was that unless a cruiser happened along just as a merchantman was being looted and her crew butchered, or immediately afterward, the chance of capturing the scoundrels was remote.

The chief of a large section of the Chinese pirates was old Moy Sen, a rich Chinaman who lived in a handsome home in Canton and posed as a peaceful trader. He owned a large fleet of junks and one steamer, and there was not a ship that left Hong Kong with a rich cargo that he did not know all about. The evil genius of the Malays was a shrewd scoundrel known as Leandrio, and he and Moy Sen operated under what would be known to-day as a "gentlemen's agreement," by which they divided up the territory in a general way and did not interfere with each other.

Norton argued that the pirates were bound to keep on robbing and burning and murdering in spite of anything we could do, and that we could derive plenty of excitement and large profits by robbing *them*. Incidentally, he contended we would put a lot of them out of business for good and all, thus contributing to the end desired by all nations.

It was arranged that I should pose as Dr. Burnet, a rich English physician who was cruising in his private yacht for his health. The *Florence* and *Surprise* were to carry some general cargoes from port to port among the islands but were so to shape their cruises that we could keep closely in touch with them. They were to be given large crews and so heavily armed as to be safe from piratical attacks. The *Leckwith* was to do all of the preying on the pirates, and the loot we took from them was to be turned over to the other ships at the meeting-places. It was arranged that the bulk of our loot should be sent to a firm of Chinamen at Singapore, who dealt largely in dishonest cargoes, but were absolutely honest with their clients.

With the *Leckwith's* bunkers stuffed with coal, we headed for the islands in search of pirates. We then had a crew of about seventy-five men, though at different times we had as few as fifty and as many as one hundred, independent of the "black gang" in the fire- and engine-rooms. The crews of the three ships were frequently interchanged, except for about fifteen especially brave and reckless fellows who were always kept on the *Leckwith*.

In the guise of a trading ship we sometimes trapped the pirates into coming alongside and grappling with us, which made it easy work for us, but when we had reason to think they had valuable booty on board we went at them full-tilt under steam and took it away from them. All of our guns, which were always unshipped when we went into port, were close up against the rail and were concealed under what looked like deck cargo, but it was the work of only a moment to cast off their covering and lower a section of the bulwarks long enough to give them a wide radius of action.

OUR first experience was a profitable one. When near the "hunting grounds" we lowered the smokestack, got up our canvas and sailed along, awaiting developments. We were getting in among the islands when we met a big junk which had just looted and scuttled a richly laden Brazilian barkentine. We made a pretense of trying to get away, but in reality we eased our sheets to hasten matters along. When she was close astern of us, with the wind abeam, we luffed up, got out guns ready for action in a jiffy and,

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as we crossed her bows, raked her fore and aft with our carronades, which were loaded almost to the muzzle with slugs and nails. Before her commander could change his course, with his decks littered with dead and mangled, we came about and gave him a broadside at close quarters, along with a deadly rifle-fire from the hitherto unseen members of the crew who had been concealed in the 'tween decks.

He replied to this with a lot of stink-pots—only a few of which came aboard and were tossed into the sea before any ill effects were felt from their nauseating fumes—and a weak and poorly directed fire from his guns.

Taken completely by surprise and with more than half of their number littering the reddened deck, the pirates were panic-stricken. Before they could regain their senses we came about again and gave them another broadside, which put them at our mercy. As we ranged alongside, keeping up a rifle-fire, but disdaining any further use of our guns, they managed to launch a couple of boats, and all who could get into them pulled for the nearest island. When we threw our grappling irons and hauled in on them, the few survivors who had strength enough left to get to the rail threw themselves overboard and swam for it. The first man aboard the junk had one of his legs almost severed by the wicked sword of a badly wounded Chinaman, and after that bit of fiendishness our men lost no time in making sure that the rest of them were really dead. We took out of the junk fully one hundred thousand dollars' worth of specie, silk, tea, porcelain, and drugs, and then set fire to her, leaving her to bury her own dead.

After that easily won victory we trapped and sank half a dozen proas and feluccas in the same way, though with more spirited resistance in some cases. We had two men killed in these engagements, and a dozen more or less seriously injured. Norton sustained an ugly cut on the leg that sent him to the hospital, and I got a slash on the arm that gave me considerable trouble for a few days. In only one instance did a ship get away from us, and that was when two proas attacked us on either side in a dead calm that settled before we could get steam up. We could not change our position, while they maneuvered with their long oars, and one of them escaped, though she took a lot of dead with her. We got nothing from them to speak of, but there was excitement in plenty, and we gloried in it. Norton had not overdrawn the picture of the adventurous China Sea.

WE HAD turned our cargo over to the *Florence*, along with a number of wounded men, and were back among the islands, when early one evening a full-rigged ship hove in sight. She passed us, but was not more than six miles away when we saw flashes that told us she had been attacked, and we lost no time in going to her assistance.

As we closed in we saw a Malay felucca on each side of her and the pirates swarming on her decks, with the crew putting up a brave fight. Running the *Leckwith* up on her starboard quarter, we threw our men aboard and they went at the pirates savagely from the rear. I led the boarding-party, for it looked as though it would be one of the kind of fights that I never would miss. In those days I was young, athletic and vigorous, and I had rather have a fight, with death at one end of it, than anything else. No matter where I went, or what the odds against us, I knew the men of the *Leckwith* would be at my heels, for a braver set of daredevils never lived.

The Malays outnumbered us more than two to one, but we went at them with a fury that was new to them and were slowly forcing them back toward their one good boat—we had smashed the other one to bits when we slammed alongside—when a beautiful white yacht came tearing up on the port quarter and sent three boatloads of men to our assistance in smart style. They clambered over the bows under command of a stockily built young officer wearing what looked like the uniform of a naval captain, and we had the pirates between us.

I understood later, when I learned who and what they were, why these reenforcements, instead of discouraging the Malays, caused them to fight with renewed desperation, but they could not withstand our combined rush, and the last of them soon went over the side into their proa, which drifted away into the darkness when they cut her loose. However, in the last few minutes of fighting, the young British officer, as I took him to be, sustained a savage cut in his right shoulder, and after we had laid aside our dead and given our wounded rough at-

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tention I was surprised to receive an inquiry from him as to whether we had a surgeon on board. Taking him aboard the *Leckwith,* I dressed his wound on the cabin table. I then saw that his uniform was that of a captain, but not of a naval officer. He told me his name was Deverell, but when I asked him the name of his ship he answered evasively, and I had learned the ways of the China Sea too well to press the question.

"Your wound is a rather bad one," I told him, "and is likely to require further attention. I expect to be cruising in this neighborhood for some time, and shall be glad to have you call on me if I can be of any service to you."

He mystified me still more when he replied: "We know you, Doctor, and will know where to find you if it becomes necessary."

I had not time just then to think much about the strange incident, for we had six men killed and there were fully twenty-five more with injuries of some sort. When I came to look myself over I found that one bullet had grazed the top of my head and another my chest, while the right shoulder of my jacket had been sliced off by a cut that would have taken my arm with it had it been properly placed. My only injury was a trifling flesh-wound on the leg.

When we got clearing up the decks nearly sixty dead Malays were thrown overboard. The merchantman, which was an English bark, had twelve of her crew killed, and so many of the survivors were badly cut up that only six men were fit for duty. We left enough of our men on board to work the ship and convoyed her to within two hundred miles of Singapore. That episode netted us not only a glorious fight but a great reputation as the friend and protector of honest shipping.

ON OUR way back to the islands we sighted the mysterious yacht once more. Evidently she was looking for us, for she changed her course as soon as she made us out, and sent a boat alongside with a request that I come aboard, as the Captain was very ill. I found him suffering from surgical fever, as I had predicted, and in rather a bad way. I dressed his wound and treated him and stood by for three or four days, visiting him twice a day and returning immediately to the *Leckwith,* for, while my services were plainly appreciated, it seemed that I was not wanted on the strange ship any longer than was necessary.

There was an air of mystery about her that puzzled and fascinated me. As I entered Deverell's cabin on my first visit I thought I heard the rustle of a skirt in the passageway behind me. Before I could make any inquiry, Deverell, as though reading my mind, requested me to ask him no questions about anything relating to the ship. On my last visit, when I told him he needed no further attention, he said, after thanking me, "I am master here and I am not. No doubt things seem strange to you, and they really are stranger than you think, but I can not tell you more now. Fate seems to have thrown us together, however, and I believe we shall see more of each other and get better acquainted. I hope so. Good-by."

LATE one afternoon we sighted a big proa close to an island, and less than half a mile farther on we came on another one partly hidden in the mouth of a creek in a larger island on the starboard hand. I was fussing with the torpedo when we came upon them and it struck me that this would be a good chance to put it to the test. We bent on a towing line of new manila rope, one hundred fathoms long, and had everything in readiness by the time it was dark.

We kept a sharp lookout, and it was not long until we heard the soft chug of oars off the starboard bow. The whaleboat, which was manned and waiting, at once set off in a course which, we figured, would carry the towing-line across the bow of the proa. A few minutes later we made out the other proa coming up astern on the port side. The pair of them got so close that it looked as though something had gone wrong with my torpedo, and I was just about to divide our crew to meet them on both sides when there was a flash and a roar less than fifty yards away and the complete success of my invention was demonstrated. The proa was thrown out of the water, turned over and badly smashed up. We never knew how many of her crew were killed by the explosion, but not many could have escaped.

The other craft swung around to board us, but we riddled it with full charges from

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the fore and aft carronades and it began to sink. The survivors took to the water and a lot of them attacked the whaleboat as it was making its way back to the ship. The boat's crew were prepared for them and their heavy cutlasses chopped off every hand that grasped the gunwale and split open every head they could reach.

At Singapore, where we discharged our cargo, our agents reported that Moy Sen was vowing vengeance on us for the loot we had wrested from him and the havoc we had spread among his fleet, and that he had caused the report to be actively circulated at Hong Kong that the *Leckwith* was not a private yacht, but a pirate, preying on legitimate commerce. As a result many robberies with which we had nothing at all to do were being laid at our door, and we were advised to be cautious. We worked our way back to the rendezvous and, after consulting with Norton, I took my interpreter, Ah Fen, who was half "Chinkie" and half Malay, from the *Leckwith* and went to Hong Kong on the *Surprise* to see just what was going on.

AMONG THE ISLANDS

THE PIRATE QUEEN

"THE Beautiful White Devil," a woman pirate, whom I at first regarded as a purely fanciful being, came into my life on this visit to Hong Kong in the early days of 1876.

While waiting for Ah Fen's report I lounged around the hotel. Soon I began to hear weird stories of a woman pirate who, while never molesting honest merchantmen, preyed mercilessly and successfully on the Chinese and Malay pirates, just as Norton and I were doing. It was said that she was exquisitely beautiful of face and diabolically black of heart; that she led her band of cutthroats in person and gloried in the shedding of black and yellow blood by the barrel. She traveled in a steam yacht of phenomenal speed and had never failed in her desperate exploits. No one in Hong Kong had ever seen her, and she was known only as "The Beautiful White Devil."

It occurred to me at once that if such a woman really did exist it might have been her ship whose captain I had attended, but I could not make myself believe the tales that were told me.

However, after I had heard the report of Ah Fen, I put more confidence in what I had been told, for he repeated the same wild story. It was a well-established fact in the minds of Moy Sen and his followers, and she was as much hated as we were. It was said she had inherited an avenging oath against the pirates from some male member of her family, who had been a terror to them before her. Moy Sen was swearing renewed vengeance on both of us, but, inasmuch as the lady seemed to bear a charmed life, he proposed to go after me first.

Then a man called at my hotel one evening and asked if an English physician was stopping there, and I recognized Captain Deverell, but he was as formal as a stranger, and I did not indicate that I knew him. He asked if he could consult with me and I took him to my room, where he assumed a much more cordial air.

"I called," he said, "to invite you to take a cruise with me so that we may get better acquainted and I can show you my appreciation of your kindness."

"How long will you be out?" I asked.

"A week or a month; whatever time suits your pleasure."

I did some quick thinking. If there was a woman pirate it was her ship that Deverell commanded, I was sure. If I accepted, I might go the way of other men whom, if the reports I had heard were to be trusted, she had picked up, and who never returned. It was an uncanny proceeding, yet the very mystery of it attracted me as a magnet does steel.

I packed my bag and turned it over to a man whom Deverell summoned from the street. Ah Fen was instructed to watch for the *Surprise*, rejoin the *Leckwith* and report to Norton. Late in the evening we went to the Bund, where a boat that was waiting at an out-of-the-way landing up near the native quarter took us out to the ship, which was lying fully six miles off shore. It was the same ship I had seen several times before, but her rig had been altered. On board of her were all the comforts and conveniences of a yacht, with the discipline of a warship.

I was given the cabin of the surgeon, who had died recently. Deverell took me to his room and we talked until midnight. Soon after we got under way he threw open a panel, exposing a life-size painting of the most beautiful woman I had ever seen.

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"Is that The Beautiful White Devil?" I asked.

"That is our Queen," he replied gravely, "and it is by that name alone that she is spoken of on this ship."

"She certainly is entitled to the first part of the name by which she is known ashore, whether or not she deserves the last section of it," I said, with open admiration.

"Instead of being cold-blooded and bloodthirsty, as you seem to have heard, she is tender and sympathetic, and she has devoted a great part of her money to the relief of suffering humanity. She deprecates killing even villainous Malays and Chinks, but she will not be defeated, cost what it will. Never since I joined the ship have I seen a wanton act of cruelty."

"What is her life, and what is the motive of it?" I asked.

"She will have to tell you that herself, but before you see her I want to warn you. Every man who sees the Queen falls in love with her. She is not to be won by any man. She has devoted her life to a particular purpose and we have devoted our lives to her."

"That sounds very romantic and interesting," I observed. "What is the special purpose to which you are all pledged?"

A shrug of the shoulders and a smile made up the only answer.

Deverell then asked all manner of questions about my life, admitting that, through their spies, they had been in touch with me from the day I entered their waters and had come to regard me as a kindred soul, to which fact I owed my invitation from their Queen.

IT WAS considerably after eight bells before I retired, but my sleep was not long or heavy. At breakfast time Deverell, wearing a smart uniform, escorted me aft to the private quarters of the Queen. They had the air and exclusiveness of a flagship, but were much more spacious and were fitted out with a daintiness that bespoke generations of culture.

In a moment the Queen appeared. As she parted the curtains and paused in the doorway with an air of diffidence, I was transfixed by her marvelous beauty. Tall, and with the figure and manner of a goddess, I was fascinated by her eyes, deep blue and filled with sentiment and sympathy; not the eyes of a woman born to command, for there was a softness about them that was almost pleading, but of one created with a desire to be herself commanded and dominated by a stronger nature. Unconfined, her hair, when I saw it, would have swept the floor, but it was twisted into a great black, glistening crown; a little detail that made her appear more than ever the Queen.

"I already know Dr. Burnet," she said, as she swept toward me with superb grace and infinite charm of manner and extended her hand, small and soft.

"And I feel that I already know you," was a blunder into which her eyes led me.

Instantly the look of animation which had come into her wonderful eyes gave way to one of sadness. "But I fear," she said, "that the reports you have heard regarding me are very different from those I have had concerning you, which caused me to want to meet you, that I might thank you for your kindness to Captain Deverell."

I stumbled into another tactless reply: "I have only one fault to find with what I have been told. You should be known as 'The Beautiful White Angel.'" It was not a polite thing to say, but I was hopelessly, almost heedlessly, in love, and it always has been my way to go straight at things.

Her answer, only through her eyes, added to my embarrassment, but before breakfast was over we were getting along better. At the end of the meal the Queen and I retired to the lounging-room, Deverell going forward to look after the ship.

"We are headed for my retreat," she explained. "I should like to have you stay with us as long as you can. I will put you down in Hong Kong or Singapore on three or four days' notice."

I assured her the prospect was delightful. With a bow and a smile, she asked me to tell her all about myself, and displayed much interest.

My infatuation grew stronger every time I was in her magnetic presence, which charged my whole being with the electrical energy of life at its best, but I said not another word to her about it, on the ship. As we came to understand each other better she asked me to tell her all I had heard about her. I repeated the vapory whisperings as to her wonderful beauty and her alleged bloodthirstiness, which latter stories, I told her, could not be tolerated for an instant by any one who had ever seen her. She smiled bitterly.

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"I never have cared what people said or thought of me," she said very slowly, "until recently. My life has been hard, and I have had to face and solve its problems alone. Craving friendship, as flowers do the sun, I have had to cut myself off from the world and try to make myself believe that I have neither heart nor conscience."

ON THE afternoon of the third day out from Hong Kong we ran into a group of islands, off to the eastward of the regular course to Singapore. Just as dinner was announced a flag was waved from the bridge and I made out an answering signal on the steep side of a small island just ahead of us, but could see no sign of either a landing or an opening. Then a messenger brought word that the Queen was waiting dinner for me. The ship slowed down while we were at dinner and finally the screw stopped. Immediately the Queen led the way to the deck.

"This," she said, "is my kingdom—without a king. Isn't it beautiful?"

I assured her that it was the most beautiful place I had ever seen, wherein, when day dawned, I found I had not exaggerated. We were at the head of an oval lake, perhaps a mile and a half long, with mountains rising crescent-shaped around it. There was a small village of English cottages and native huts. On three sides of the lake was a narrow beach; the fourth side, toward the sea, was a perpendicular bluff, sixty feet or more high. I searched it for the passage through which we had entered the lake, but nothing could I see but a bare wall of dark rock. The Queen smiled at my perplexity. "Wait until to-morrow," she laughed. "We will go ashore at sunrise."

SHE appeared with the sun, accompanied by a Dyak woman whom I had not seen before, and we landed at a little stone dock in front of the village. All of the inhabitants, consisting of about fifty English and Scotch men and women, some with silvered locks and bent backs and some of them crippled by the pirates, and nearly as many natives, crowded the pier to meet her, their manner one of the greatest affection and deference. We walked through the village, which was a model of neatness, and on up a winding path for nearly a mile, when a sharp turn around a flank of the mountain brought us to a large bungalow—the palace of the Queen.

While breakfast was being prepared she made herself more beautiful by changing her dress of European style for a native costume of flowing silk so becoming that I wondered at her ever wearing anything else. After breakfast she looked down at the little town and far out to sea in silence for a long time and then told me the story of her life.

Her name, she said, was Katherine Crofton; her father one of the younger branches of a family headed by a baron. The family crest was a sheaf of wheat, and the motto, "God Grants the Increase." Her branch of the family had lived in the south of Ireland for several generations. Another branch had long lived at Derry Willow in the County Leitrim. Her father was a lieutenant-commander in the British Navy, and to prevent an accident he disobeyed the order of an incompetent and arrogant superior officer. In a quarrel that followed, her father knocked his superior down and otherwise abused him, for which he was court-martialed and dismissed.

"My father was a high-spirited man," she continued, "and his disgrace embittered him against England and everything English. He soon left home, and when we next heard from him he was in Hong Kong. When I was about fifteen, he wrote mother and me to take a P. & O. ship for Singapore, where we would find further instructions. When we got there father was waiting for us on a handsome yacht, the *Queen*. I am still using her. He brought us to this island, where he had established a small settlement and built a warehouse and a machine-shop for repairs. He had taken great pains to make his rendezvous secure from discovery.

"Evidently this lake is the crater of an old volcano which left a high, narrow barrier between it and the sea. But there was a narrow opening, with a deep channel leading straight out to sea. He had the opening closed up with rocks until it was just wide enough to admit the *Queen*. Then he built a great double gate, which, though it weighs many tons, is so arranged that four men can operate it. The gate is strong enough to stand any storm, but to avoid straining it we keep it open in heavy weather, unless ships are hovering about. From a watch-tower on the mountain we get a clear view of the sea in all directions, and a man is

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always on duty there. The ridge cuts off the ocean and the village is entirely hidden behind it, as is the *Queen* when her topmasts are housed. When the gate is closed it can not be distinguished at a distance of an eighth of a mile, for it exactly resembles the rocks on both sides of it, and the channel is known to no one but us, and no other ship would dare to venture within a mile and a half of the shore on account of the rocks.

"I did not understand at first the meaning of all of these things. Father went out on frequent voyages and returned with more or less cargo, which was placed in the warehouse until it was full. Then father would change the appearance of his ship and take cargoes out and sell them. He always took mother and me along on these trips, though never on the others, and, young as I was, I learned a lot about navigation. On these trips we brought back books and magazines and so were able to keep a little in touch with the outside world.

"When I was not much older than nineteen father and mother were taken desperately ill, and he called me into his room and made a confession. He said that in his hatred of the British he had turned pirate and had been for all those years preying on ships flying the flag he despised. He had also, occasionally, waged war on the native pirates and taken their loot from them, which explained why he had frequently come in with wounded men on board, and he made me swear that if he died I would continue the work he had begun. He told me I could rely on Frank Deverell, his chief officer, whom he said he hoped I would some day marry,"—this last with just a trace of sarcasm. "My father died the next week and my mother three months later.

"That was four years ago. I have kept the oath, but the fulfilment has brought me increasing misery. My attacks on the British flag have been few—in fact, I have given timely assistance to many more English ships than I have robbed, and hundreds of their passengers and crews owe their lives to me, but I have preyed on the natural pirates of these waters as ardently, perhaps, as did my father.

"Yet I have no greater moral right to take from them what they have stolen than I have to rob a British or an American ship, nor can I excuse myself for the loss of life that goes with my attacks on them. I am, in fact, no better than they are, for I am in the same class with them—a pirate. My conscience has troubled me more and more until it has sickened me with the whole wretched business. A bad promise is better broken than kept, and I am about ready to quit all of this robbery and butchery and try to return to decency and civilization. As to the other stories you have heard about me—they are simply lies!"

Toward the end she spoke rapidly and passionately and when she finished she was all a-quiver, and her eyes filled with tears. After a long pause, during which she regained control of herself, she said:

"Now, Captain, I have told you all. I am partly justified, if such a vow as mine can be pleaded as justification, but why are you in this business?"

Her sudden inquiry, following her bitter denunciation of pirates and those who preyed on them, surprised and embarrassed me. I told her that I was in it only because of the adventure.

"That is not a sufficient excuse," she replied. "I had some reason for my actions, but you have none." A moment later she added, gently: "I did not mean to pass judgment on you. We must all be governed by our own consciences."

Neither one of us cared to continue the conversation, and I was glad when she suggested that she would have a servant show me to a smaller bungalow, a short distance away, where I was to stay, though taking my meals at the "palace."

I TOLD Deverell enough to make him understand that the Queen had told me her life story, and from what he said I satisfied myself that not only had the elder Crofton been an out-and-out pirate, but his bewitching daughter had done honor to his name, for two or three years at least.

After luncheon the Queen and I set off toward the mountain-top, nearly one thousand feet above us, but we did not reach it, for the heat was intense.

"Well, what do you think of us now?" she asked, on our way down, after I had told her how I had spent the forenoon.

"I think enough of you to devote my whole life to your service!" I quickly replied.

She gave me a long, searching look that seemed to go right through me and lay my whole soul open before her; then she took

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the lead and, without a word, walked rapidly on to her bungalow, and I walked on to mine.

When I came back to dinner she was waiting for me in her bower. As she came to meet me and extended her hand she said, earnestly and almost sadly: "I believe you were honest and sincere in what you said this afternoon, but I can only say 'Thank you.' What you suggested is impossible."

In the three weeks that followed I urged my love upon her with all of my determination, but she refused to change her decision and apparently was as firm in it as she was at first. It was agreed that we should both give up piracy, but all of our arguments ended there until finally, one afternoon, as we sat looking out over the sea and talking of the ordinary affairs of life, she said, slowly and emphatically, "Deverell was my father's right-hand man. I am going to give this place to him, just as it stands, take the next ship for England, lay my case before the Home Secretary and ask him for a full pardon. I will confess to him that I have taken from the pirates what they had stolen from others. To offset that offense I have hundreds of written statements from people whose lives I have saved from the pirates. I believe I can secure a pardon, and if I do I will meet you with a clear conscience and become your wife!"

In a tumult of joy I sprang to her side and started to take her in my arms, but she stretched out her hand and held me off. I had never seen such a serious look on her exquisite face and there were tears in her eyes.

"Not yet," she said, tenderly but firmly. "I have said I would marry you only when my name had been cleared of its dishonor, and until that condition has been complied with you can not regard me as your promised wife. After that you may do with me as you please, but not until then."

Her accession of conscience had been so great that she considered herself disgraced, and that nothing short of a pardon from the British Government, so bitterly hated by her father, could restore her respectability. With my most persuasive arguments I tried to dissuade her from going to England, but without effect. I urged her to marry me at once and go with me to America or some other country, but she would not listen. She feared she would be found and arrested later on and bring dishonor on me; she seeemed to have no thought of herself in that respect, and, seeing that, I better understood the depth of her great love.

There was nothing to do but fall in with her plan. She packed up the most treasured of her personal effects, paid a last visit to the graves of her father and mother, and two days later we sailed away. Just before going on board she summoned the villagers and told them she had given all of her property to Deverell and was going away never to return. They wept and showed great distress, but Kate was quietly happy and her glorious eyes were firm and undimmed as they looked for the last time on her beauteous isle.

I knew about where to find the *Florence.* We picked her up in a few days and I boarded her and made sail to meet the *Leckwith* at the rendezvous. Kate went on to Singapore, where she took the next ship for England. Six months later I received word that she had died suddenly there, before she had applied for a pardon, and the course of my life was changed again.

FAREWELL TO THE EAST

A BATTLE WITH THE PIRATES

WHEN I rejoined the *Leckwith,* I told Norton simply that I had been away on strictly private business. A day or two later I told him I had decided to sell the *Florence* and *Surprise* and quit the business we were in. Norton, dumfounded, advanced many arguments against such a course, and finally he lost his temper. "It may be," he suggested sneeringly, "that this is due to the fact that Moy Sen has threatened to exterminate us. If you don't want to fight the old scoundrel why don't you say so?"

That dart struck a tender spot. I would be the last one to quit under a threat or under fire, and Norton knew it. "Far from running away from a fight of that kind," I told Norton, "I should much rather run into it. We will cruise around awhile to see whether the Chinkies really mean to give us battle. But it is the sport of it that I want and nothing else, for if it comes off it will be a great fight."

Nothing happened for ten days or two weeks. We saw several junks which we could easily have stood up and robbed, but I would not permit it. Then, late one eve-

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ning an enormous junk appeared suddenly from behind an island. She appeared to carry only a small crew, but when we came together it seemed to me for a moment that she had more Chinamen on board than I had ever seen before at one time. Suddenly she swung to starboard and would have smashed into our bow if we had not gone full speed astern. As she passed under our short bowsprit she threw a grappling-iron which caught on our port bow.

We lit our battle-lamps so that they illuminated our deck, where we preferred to fight because we knew every foot of it. We had about one hundred and twenty-five men on the *Leckwith*, Norton having taken the pick of the crews of the *Florence* and *Surprise* while I was away, in order to be prepared for any contingency. The junk's grappling-iron held and as soon as she was clear of us we went ahead slowly. This drew the two ships together, which was what we wanted. As the junk swung around we let go our carronades, then gave them a volley of rifle-fire and met them with another as the ships came together. They rushed over the rail at us in a sulfur cloud. Then it was revolvers and cutlasses.

The pirates resorted to their old trick of throwing themselves on the deck, as though killed or wounded, and trying to hamstring or disembowel us, but we made sure that every Chinaman was dead when he struck the deck. Every blow was that of an executioner. In a few minutes, as it seemed then, though it may have been much longer, the decks were slippery with blood, and I could actually hear it dripping through the scuppers into the quiet sea.

It was such a fight as one gets into only in years, perhaps only once in a lifetime. The butchery was dreadful, but the excitement of it set one's blood ablaze. Our men became demons. As they shot and slashed they shouted and sang. A disarmed Chinkie seized me around the waist and dragged me in among his blood-stained fellows, but we were so closely wedged together that they could not chop at me without striking one another, and they never thought of stabbing me. Norton and the mighty Lorensen, swinging an enormous Chinese sword which he had taken from one of his victims, came to my assistance and in a twinkling I was free, with dead and maimed pirates piled up around me in a circle. I could feel sword-cuts now and then, but they seemed like pin-pricks. All of us were so covered with blood that there was no telling whether it came from our own wounds or those we had inflicted.

"That makes us even!" I shouted to Lorensen as I cut down a yellow devil who had crept up behind him. A Chinkie who had lost his sword seized my empty pistol from its holster, pressed it over my heart and pulled the trigger. I let him go that far and then laughed at him as I backed away and cut his head half off. I saw Norton go down and fought my way to him to find that he had only slipped in a red pool. He had been singing a loud requiem of profane abuse over those who met his sword, and he resumed it where he had left off, hardly missing a note.

We kept the pirates in front of us and steadily forced our way forward. Every time one of our own men fell it made us fight the harder. The Chinkies cut and slashed with all their desperate savagery, but it was impossible for them to stand before the fury of our men and, though they outnumbered us four or five to one, they finally began to give way. We followed them to their own deck and piled them up on top of each other.

Finally a lot of them took to the hold, and the rest, perhaps a hundred of them, jumped overboard. Those that foolishly fled to the hold we treated to a dose of their own medicine. We threw their stink-pots down among them until the air was thick with the poisonous smoke, and closed the hatches. Some of them, gasping and blinded, tried to escape through the guarded gangways; the rest of them died in the hold. There was not a pirate left alive on the junk or on our own deck.

BEFORE we had time to congratulate ourselves or count noses, we discovered a big steamer almost on top of us. It was the *Ly-ce-moon*, the flagship of Moy Sen's fleet, and, though we did not know it, the old pirate chief himself was in command of her. We barely had time to refill our revolvers and get back on the *Leckwith* when she banged into us and made fast with her grapplers. She was nearly twice the size of the *Leckwith* and her rail was three or four feet above ours.

We did not know how many men she carried, nor did any of us care, for we were mad

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with monotonous murder; the bestial bloodlust that comes from a glut of human butchery was over all of us. We were both exhilarated and enraged; stimulated by the quick work we had made of the junk and furious at the cunning and extremely dangerous trap that had been set for us. The junk was the bait. It was expected that we would attack and board her; that our boarding force would be overwhelmed by the hundreds of devils who were crammed into her hold, and while this fight was on, the *Ly-ce-moon* was to come up on the other side and finish us off.

When Moy Sen threw his grappling-irons we made them fast and before he had time to think, we were scrambling over his high sides, revolvers in one hand and cutlasses in the other. The Chinaman, even when he is a pirate, has no rapid resourcefulness. Moy Sen's crew were prepared to board us and when we carried the fight to them with an altogether unexpected rush, they were so taken by surprise that they offered little real resistance to our invasion. But by the time we were all on board they had regained their senses, and the fight that followed was even more savage than the one before.

There were no lights, except those under the *Leckwith's* rail, which did us little good, and the pirates fired at us from hiding-places about their well-known decks which we could not make out until our eyes had become accustomed to the darkness. Our men shot and, when their revolvers were empty, slashed at every noise. In order that we might not attack each other we kept up a contemptuous chant of curses on the Chinese, counting time to it with our cutlasses.

The result was a repetition of what had occurred with the crew of the junk, but it required much longer to accomplish it. The junk had carried more men than the steamer, but the first battle was fought on a well-lighted deck with every foot of which we were familiar, while the second struggle took place on a strange ship and in semi-darkness.

We strung our forces along the full length of the *Ly-ce-moon*, to prevent the pirates from getting behind us, and fought our way crosswise of the ship. One of the first things that caught my eye was the figure of a gigantic Chinaman in the after part of the vessel, who at first directed the fight and then took a large hand in it himself. It was old Moy Sen himself. He was the biggest Chinaman I had ever seen and must have been a full-blooded Tartar. He was raw-boned and his face was that of a fiend. He had tremendously long arms, and every time he swung his sword he cleared a space. Lorensen and I, who were close together, while Norton was farther forward, tried to fight our way to him, but we were held back by important business directly in front of us that demanded immediate attention. By the time we succeeded in working our way aft the chief of all the pirates had disappeared.

Made more desperate by the annihilation of their comrades on the junk and inspired by the presence of their great leader, the Chinkies fought with a grim stubbornness which I had never before seen them display. They made no noise about it, but kept choppin away, sometimes aimlessly, but always chopping. The scent of veritable rivers of blood would have sickened us, and our tired arms, like those of our enemies, would have settled into a methodical swing, had we not been spurred on by one victory and the prospect of a still greater one. My sword was broken off at the hilt in warding off a vicious blow, but before another one could be struck I seized a falling Chinkie and held him in front of me, while his blood gushed all over me, until I had secured his sword, which I used as effectively as my own.

In trying to hamstring me, a half-dead pirate gashed the calf of my leg to the bone, yet I scarcely noticed it. I felt something trickling down my face and knew a glancing blow had laid open my scalp, but there was no twinge of pain. It was the same with all of the others. No one thought of his wounds unless he was disabled, when, if he had strength enough, he dragged himself to the rear to be out of the way. Nothing was in our minds but to fight and win. Had there been twice as many of the pirates, the result, in the end, would have been the same, for it was not in us to be defeated that night.

Gradually, but slowly at first, we got the upper hand of them. When the inspiring voice of their chief was silenced they gave way more rapidly, and our men chased them over the side and rushed into cabins, deck-houses, fo'c's'le, engine-room and stokehole, hunting out those who had sought hiding-places and putting an end to the continued danger of pot shots.

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IT WAS broad daylight by the time we had thrown overboard the last of the dead Chinamen and washed down the decks, after giving our own badly wounded men such attention as was possible under the conditions. We thought for a time that Moy Sen had escaped, but we found him, almost chopped to pieces, close to the after-wheelhouse, with three of our men beside him. Except for his great size we would not have known him, but he was identified by Ah Fen, who was the only one on board who had ever seen him.

We had twenty-one men killed and twice as many so seriously injured that a number of them subsequently died, and there was hardly a man of us who did not have one or more wounds of some kind. In addition to the cut on my leg, which was a nasty one and barely missed the tendons, and the scalp wound, which was not a severe one, I had a dozen cuts and gashes of assorted sizes and widely distributed. The point of a sword had ripped open my already scarred cheek and another one had taken away a souvenir from my arm. Norton had a long cut along his abdomen, which almost accomplished the intended disembowelment, and half of one ear was hanging by the skin. He also had many minor injuries, but neither of us was damaged beyond speedy repair. Lorensen, a mighty man in any position, who had sent as many Chinamen to join Confucius as had any of us, was one of the very few who escaped with only trifling scratches.

On the *Ly-ce-moon* were two teak chests, filled with gold and silver coin and ingots, silverware, jewelry and precious and semi-precious stones of the Oriental variety, apparently representing the most valuable portions of several stolen cargoes, and these I allowed to be transferred to the *Leckwith*, in preference to throwing them overboard.

It then became a question as to what we should do with Moy Sen's ships. We compromised the difficulty by scuttling the junk and putting a crew aboard the steamer. We went to Singapore, arriving there in the early part of 1876, as I remember it, to close up our business, and sold the pirate ship to our Chinese agents for a third of what she was worth. We also sold to them, for a small part of its value, the loot we had taken from her, but all of that money was divided up between Norton and the crew. I held to my promise and touched none of it.

On the way to Hong Kong we stopped at a small, out-of-the-way island, landed all of our guns and most of our small arms, and buried them in a deep hole, over which we planted a lot of young coconut trees. The *Leckwith* then became, in fact, a private yacht.

The *Florence* was waiting for us and I at once disposed of her, through our agents, to an English trading company. In a few weeks the *Surprise* came in from Yokohama, where she had delivered a cargo, and was sold to a Japanese house with a branch in Hong Kong. I remember that she brought seven thousand pounds, which I gave to Norton. We paid off their crews, with a bonus and their share of the profits, and saw that they were scattered and shipped on long voyages in different directions. I insisted on treating all of our men with a liberality that amounted to prodigality, but even after that Norton and I divided up something over $300,000, as the remaining share of what we had cleaned up from the pirates.

We loafed around Hong Kong for weeks, and it was there that the word came to me of the death of Miss Crofton, "The Beautiful White Angel." I could not bear to remain amid scenes that would constantly remind me of her. So I left the China Sea behind me and never have returned to it.

After a fruitless expedition after buried treasure in Korea, we sailed for Shanghai and from there for London.

(Other Adventures of Captain Boynton will appear in the next number.)

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MR. MILES FORSYTHE'S nose was broken in early youth, owing to a hot grounder striking the curved surface of a half-buried pebble instead of the smooth ground, and glancing against that useful organ with the velocity of an overdue comet on the home trip. Had that fatal ball veered but half an inch from its course, had the wind blown from the south but two miles an hour harder; had the bat encountered the ball the thousandth part of a second sooner, it would have touched the other side of the pebble aforesaid, glanced two yards four inches clear of its victim, and Mr. Miles Forsythe's life might have been all happiness. But it's always easy enough to figure out what might have been!

The nose in question never grew straight again, but canted off drunkenly toward the left ear, as if its suspicions had been aroused by some mysterious odor on that side of the road. Its ceaseless endeavors to locate the origin of elusive smells from the left had imparted a peculiarly sinister expression to what had once been a peculiarly frank and engaging countenance. It conveyed a perpetual suggestion of evasiveness, as if forever dodging anything in the nature of a direct issue that might be shoved under it.

Character, said the great Napoleon, lies in the nose. It may be debatable whether in the days of its conformity Mr. Forsythe's nose gave any clue to its owner's propensities, but certain it is that after its deviation from the straight road it warped not only his features, but his nature as well. His views of life became biased as a direct result of the deflection of his character repository.

"Give me an outdoor party," he lamented to his crony, Mr. James Tillinghast, as the two stood in front of the First National, so that nobody would suspect them of having just taken a tonic, "and a cloud over the moon, with a piece of dimity on a bench under a lilac bush, and, if there isn't a Japanese lantern too close, you can bank on my fluent tongue and saccharine accents to lure her little jewelry-stands into my emolument-producers before mama has time to get nervous and call her in. But wait till Little Violet Eyes catches a glimpse of that side-swiped fixture by daylight, and I can call the turn on what mail will bring the ring back. The woods are full of fine ladies, Jim, that have believed me a man of feeling and an unappreciated soul, on the dark side of a deck at 11.30 P. M., and next day wondered what my number was in the rogues' gallery. If I ever get buckled up I'll have to go to one of those countries where wives never see their husbands until after the knot is tied.

"And in business: you've no idea what an obstacle that port tack has been to me! How are you to keep a man interested in your line of talk when his eyes are glued to your absconding nose, and his mind's occupied wondering whether it'll stop and

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come back or go clear around and make its next appearance under the right ear? Then, as for creating confidence—Say! who's going to repose any trust in a man's rectitude when his most salient feature is headed for a side street like a bank messenger with a gripful of greenbacks? Why, even little children catch the angle of that proboscis and think I'm after their gum-drops. I've seen some costly ones and some highly tinted ones in my time, but take it from me: that crooked air-shaft of mine has beat me out of enough promotion stock to start a Wall Street panic."

"Have you got two hundred dollars that ain't working, Miles?" inquired the unmoved Mr. Tillinghast.

Miles rattled some loose coins in his pockets and wagged his head disconsolately. "Have I got two hundred dollars?" he repeated in surprise. "With this thing dragging me cross-lots to the poorhouse by main strength! What do you want with two hundred dollars, anyhow?"

"Want it to buy an option on old Andy McIntosh's ground at Dewey."

"What for?"

Mr. Tillinghast removed the Havana from his mouth and carefully plastered a loose end of the wrapper into place. "I dropped on to something good last night," he began, lowering his voice to a confidential pitch. "You know Frierson—the new resident engineer for the H. & W. road. Well, I caught Frierson pretty well seasoned last night in the Mint. He was in a highly developed stage of gabbiness, and I managed to pick it out of him that the H. & W. people intend to make a division point at Dewey and put in shops there. I thought of old Mac's land right away. This morning I didn't lose any time getting the old tightwad over the 'phone to see if I couldn't get an option on the property. I finally got him to agree to let me have it for five hundred dollars. That's what I want the money for."

Mr. Forsythe smacked his lips. "Umhu! How long does the offer stand?"

"Until to-morrow noon. He'll be up here to-morrow."

"You told him you'd take it?"

"Oh, yes; I said I'd take it."

"And, I assume, you got three hundred of the necessary five."

Mr. Tillinghast nodded. "Yes, I managed to scout around and rustle three hundred. But that seems to be the limit, Milesy. I worked everybody I know, or could make believe I did. But I couldn't get beyond the three hundred. There's plenty in town I might go to, but they'd want to know what I intended to do with the cash, and then, most likely, go and grab the grapes themselves. On a straight borrowing proposition I could go out in these hills and find an elephant in a band of sheep easier than I could that extra two hundred in this camp to-day."

"COULDN'T you divide up with somebody and work it that way?" suggested Forsythe, reckoning the possibilities of the venture.

Tillinghast narrowed his eyes. "It's just possible I could," he conceded slowly, "but, honest, this thing is so big and fat, Miles, I'm afraid to mention it to most folks. They might try to beat me to it, or they might talk. If you just had the two hundred I'd be perfectly willing to cut it in two with you. There's a big chunk in it if we get that option. We'd just wait around until the road was ready to start and then black-jack out of them any old price we fixed."

"Does sound good," agreed Forsythe, pulling at the object of his rancor pensively. "Sounds like a snap."

"It *is* a snap! It's a cinch!"

Mr. Forsythe did some hard thinking. It sounded so promising, and he had been clinging to the ragged edge so long that he began to smell flesh-pots—to the left, of course—and his mouth watered. "It'd be nothing short of criminal prodigality to let it get away," he asserted feelingly. "There ought to be some way."

"Get your hatrack to working," urged the other. "Can't you manage to rake or scrape two hundred dollars somehow or somewhere? Ain't there anybody you could touch for that much?"

Forsythe tilted his hat forward and roughed up his back hair. He mentally reviewed his list of acquaintances for the chance philanthropist. By a rapid process of elimination he speedily reduced the number to the one possibility, the one faint hope. "I might get it from Wilson over at Helena," he ventured dubiously. "I've got to him for more than that other times."

Tillinghast promptly cast his vote for Wilson.

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"For heaven's sake go and sick yourself on him!" he implored. "Take this train and hike right over and soak him. Get it out of him, Miles, if you have to do it with a gun in one hand and a club in the other. And be sure you're back here by to-morrow morning," he cautioned, consulting his watch. "You've got just twenty minutes to catch that stub. Go and tackle him."

Miles hesitatingly drew out what money was in his pockets and counted it. There were one five dollar gold-piece, three silver dollars and a quarter.

"I'll go you!" he said with decision, and stretching his long legs to their utmost stride he hurried down the hill towards the depot.

THE two cities are only a distance of eighty miles apart, and the little three-car stub runs back and forth daily. The two-hour wait at Helena was ample for Miles to transact his business. By a strategic rush he gained the ticket window ahead of a ponderous farmer with a family of four in tow, grabbed his little pasteboard ticket, and made the stub with twenty-three seconds to the good.

Three hours later he nabbed Wilson just as he was emerging from the bar of a side street hotel in Helena. Promptly fixing a death-grip on that gentleman's arm, Miles bolted for the little card-room at the side, where he dropped his victim into the nearest chair and yelled for highballs.

"Bill, I just got to have two hundred dollars!" he gasped, plopping into an opposite chair. Without allowing time for a refusal he galloped into an explanation of his case, at the rate of four hundred words a minute.

"It sounds fine—what I could get of it," commented the victim as soon as he got an opening. "But, honest, Miles, I haven't got it! I'd like to accommodate you, but I'm as flat as a billiard-table myself. Last week I took a notion to secure control of Amalgamated. Well, you know what happened to Amalgamated day before yesterday."

Miles comprehended. "Margins," he guessed with the wisdom of a man that has suffered.

Wilson finished his highball and nodded. "Cleaned me out. Then I cleaned out my friends. To-day I haven't got enough money to singe a gnat's whisker. I wish I could help you, but——" He threw out his hands impotently.

Miles pursed his lips, lifted his eyebrows and hunched his shoulders. The several actions conveyed to Mr. Wilson the philosophical resignation with which he accepted the situation. With one accord they rose and stepped into the bar.

"Take one before you go," said Wilson, deploring his inability to succor his friend but ready to do what he could to cheer his spirits.

They sidled up to the long mahogany barrier and gave their orders. While they waited for the man in the brotherhood vest to do the mixing, Miles eyes encountered his own marred visage in the mirror behind the bar. Philosophy instantly skipped the premises.

"What else could a man expect?" he snorted viciously. "How can a man hope to have any luck that's got to travel around with an object on his face like a chevron on a sergeant's sleeve? What can a man do with a relief-map on his front like a bend in the Rocky Mountain system? Blamed if I don't feel like getting some drill-pounder over at Butte to knock it off there with a spalling-hammer when I get back!"

"Going back this evening?" inquired Wilson, encircling his glass.

"Yes. The time's up in the morning, anyway. I might as well wire Jim I fell down, and let him see if he can do any good for himself."

In the lobby he secured a telegraph-blank from the clerk and wrote out his laconic report:

Nothing Doing.

MILES

PHILOSOPHY came back after the explosion and enabled Miles to enjoy a good supper, and a cigar afterwards. At nine o'clock he bought his return ticket with what was left of the eight dollars and twenty-five cents and departed for home. Lacking the price of the Pullman accommodations, he moodily went forward to the day-coach and turned two seats facing each other. Disposing his long legs as comfortably as might be on these, he pulled his hat down to ward off the lights and addressed himself to sleep out the journey. Not being a man to worry over what couldn't be helped, he dropped

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off to slumber almost immediately, and slept peacefully until the conductor inadvertently waked him up trying to find the little marker in his hat as they neared Boulder. Miles shifted his feet, looked at his watch to see how much of the trip was over, and wondered if Jim had succeeded in locating anybody with loose money.

Miles had always complained at his own height. It made his unloved feature unduly prominent. Car seats are built to fit the average traveler. Therefore, as Miles leaned back with his hat tilted over his eyes his vision just cleared the seat in front of him. It traveled over the tops of a succession of seat-backs till it came to the mirror set in the opposite end of the coach. There it crossed the gap and, mounting the reversed seats beyond, hopped onward from seat-back to seat-back till it came to a full stop at the reflection of that much-abused member of Mr. Forsythe's facial organization which had been the occasion of so many disappointed hopes. Being discovered, the offender made a wild dash to evade the thunderbolt of scorn that Miles instantly loosened at it, but there was no escape.

"I'll get even with you!" threatened Miles, apostrophizing it savagely. "You living elbow-joint! You animated arcade! You see if I don't! I'll——"

WHAT horrible design he meditated against the enemy was lost in a sudden, rattling crash like the roar of a hundred thunders pealed at once. At the same moment there came an impact like the crush of worlds and, before he had time even to shut his mouth, Miles felt himself hurled violently across the open space he had made and flung like a rag across the opposite seat. Instantly he carromed off into the aisle, along the whole length of which he swept like a toboggan, finally coming to rest, all doubled up, under the water-cooler at the end of the car. From all about and below him came a confused roar of grinding steel, cracking glass, pounding knocks and a horrible groaning and rending of wood. The cries of startled passengers mounted above the din.

He believed he had lain there a long time (it was perhaps forty seconds) when the conductor rushed into the car and began helping the groaning and frightened people back to their seats. "No harm done! No harm done!" he repeated incessantly in reassuring tones, as he hurried along the aisle. "Just a rail spread is all. We're all right. No harm done." He stooped and gently assisted a screaming woman, who had been jammed under a seat, into the passageway, where she lay on her back and shrieked that her leg was broken.

Others, less in need of help, were recovering themselves and readjusting their minds to the situation. Barely had the crunching and pounding ceased and the train come to a standstill when the rear door of the coach opened and a young man wearing a Panama hat came in from the Pullman. He stopped beside each person he came to, and appeared to be making inquiries. Now and then he jotted down something in a little pocketbook he held in one hand. Gradually the groans and cries died down, and a word could be heard here and there. The woman with the broken leg had been carried back to the sleeping-car.

Gingerly uncoiling from his place under the water-cooler, Miles scrambled into the nearest seat and began to take stock of his bones. As many as he could locate seemed to be sound, but he was painfully conscious of a multitude of bruises and scratches on various parts of his anatomy, particularly about the head. He had been projected fully twenty feet in about one second, and some part of that distance he had apparently traversed on his face only. Glancing into the mirror he beheld the lately contemned nose-errant scraped raw the whole length of the bridge and bleeding freely.

"Got you!" he said briefly, and fell to picking splinters out of his palms.

Behind him the young man in the Panama hat was speaking to his next neighbor. "I'm the claim agent, and if you're hurt anyway we want to make it right with you. What'll you take now, and call it square? Whatever's right, you know."

"I reckon I'm not much hurt," answered a deep, pleasant voice. "I believe a good drink of whisky would do me more good than anything else right now."

"Twenty-five dollars?" persisted the claim agent. "How's that now? About right?"

"Sure!" agreed the deep voice. Miles heard a rubber snapped and a crisp rustle like new bills counted. He glanced over his shoulder. The agent was making in his direction.

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Miles Forsythe was never referred to among those who knew him as a man slow of thought or decision. In a flash he had mapped out his campaign. The unsuspecting claim agent was surprised and shocked to immobility by the sudden flashing on him of a sanguinary face in which wrath was written in capitals, and a bellow like a Normandy bull's.

"Whachu goin' to do about this?" roared the infuriated Miles, indicating his scarred physiognomy with a hand trembling with indignation. "Whachu got to say about this nose? Look at it, all broke and bashed up! Just take a look at that nose, will you? I want you to take a look at it!"

The agent saw buckets of blood and a nose all lacerated and awry. His assessing glance took in the minor details of a suit of clothes, dust from top to bottom, scratched hands and wrists, and battered hat. But that red and twisted nose called him back.

"Well, what do you think's right?" he hazarded, his eyes riveted on the majestic ruin.

Miles loudly and bitterly referred to the road—to its management, its operation, its road-bed, its rolling stock, its employees. He treated each subject separately, and elaborated with white-hot adjectives just to heighten the effect. "Two hundred dollars!" he repeated belligerently. "Just you look at that broken nose o' mine! I'm goin' to have two hundred dollars for that if a cent, d'you hear? Ain't that a beaut, now, to have to carry through life—hey?"

He got it. Of course there was parleying, but Miles absolutely and steadfastly refused to abate one jot or one tittle. He played clamorously upon the key of personal injury litigation. With a last appraising look at the gory wreck the agent counted out the blood-money to him.

"Now, how long will we be here?" demanded Miles, pocketing the spoils. "How long before we'll be started again?"

"Can't say," replied the agent. "Not before morning, though, I should say."

"How far is it to the nearest telegraph office?"

"Boulder, about a mile and a half ahead."

MILES slipped off into the darkness and began the climb to Boulder. There were bumps rapidly developing all over him wherever a bone came near the surface, and he knew that the next day would show as much blue skin on his body as white. Walking was somewhat difficult in the black night, and the scratched shins and knee-caps didn't help any. But within his breast he bore a heart full of jubilant song.

About midnight a tall, lanky raw-head-and-bloody-bones limped into the little depot at Boulder and requested a telegraph form of the night operator.

"Gee, you got pretty badly bunged up!" offered the man of the key sympathetically.

Mr. Forsythe scribbled his message and handed it over. "Oh, not so very bad." He smiled gamely.

AT TEN minutes of 1 A. M. Mr. James Tillinghast was discovered by a blue coated messenger enjoying a late lunch in a Park Street café. He had been a busy man all evening, and was busy at that moment trying to decide whom to strike for two hundred dollars next morning. The boy handed him a telegram marked, "Collect." Mr. Tillinghast paid, signed the slip and tore open the envelope. The message read:

Send automobile. I have capitalized the olfactory. MILES.

Mr. Tillinghast's brow wrinkled. "Now what in Sam Hill," he pondered in bewilderment, "have I got to do with an olfactory? And what in thunder kind of a factory *is* an olfactory anyhow?"

Then he went to the 'phone and put in the order for the automobile.

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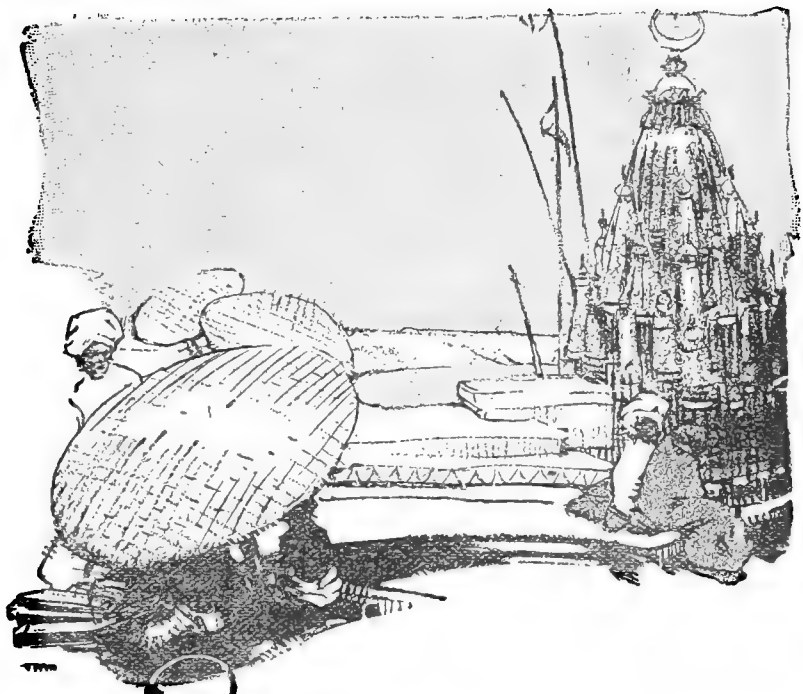

The Clemency of the MAHARAJA

by John Le Breton

SECLUDED from all possibility of social interruptions by peremptory orders given to his faithful body-servant, Colonel Fraser was in the thick of writing official despatches to his Government. He tucked his spurred heels under his chair and twisted his red mustache irritably as he paused to scan the written sheets and to wonder whether he could have set forth his facts in even simpler form, so that they might penetrate with perfect ease to the limited understanding of those high-placed servants of the Empire under whom he lived and groaned as British Resident at Dakhara. Notwithstanding an education at St. Paul's School, Darjeeling, and the additional advantages of subsequent instruction from an English tutor, his Highness of Dakhara remained an obstinate adherent of the ideas and methods of the East. He was not only Eastern but, to the mind uncorrupted by Government instructions, he was quite decidedly and unpermissibly Eastern.

Fraser called to memory some very private and confidential pronouncements which had been made for his guidance:

"It is extremely necessary that native rulers should not be alarmed, or allowed to feel that their position is insecure. They must remain under the impression that their authority is unquestioned. *At the same time*, it is your duty to make yourself acquainted with all the transactions of the State, and to ensure that it be governed with justice and benevolence. Report fully. Do not act hastily."

Fraser swear-worded his lofty-minded superiors. He told himself that it was enough to fray a man's temper at the edges to be given charge of a savage and subtle beast, and then to be expected to line him up into as pretty a show as a performing poodle.

The Maharaja constantly used the most astounding ferocity in dealing with petty

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criminals. Also, since his accession, several men of high standing at Court had perished by violence, and although he had promised to discover and punish the murderers, he had merely annexed the estates of the victims—a procedure which even the paternal Indian Government had found disconcerting. Out of the nineteen brothers who were living when he assumed the reins of authority, fifteen were missing. Some had died, others had mysteriously disappeared.

With all the good will in the world, the British Resident could not claim that he had secured for Dakhara a rule of "justice and benevolence."

There was a present and pressing trouble. Fraser had become aware that there was a conspiracy to dethrone and imprison the Maharaja, and that the leader of the movement was his Highness's brother and heir, Rasul Khan.

Now Rasul Khan had imbibed civilization at Harrow and Oxford; it agreed with him, and he flourished on it. He knew exactly what the British public "at home" would say if the infamous doings of Dakhara were brought to light. He spoke well, and he spoke plainly, and the protests which he made at the Residency had made Fraser's cheeks burn with shame for the limpet-souled officialdom which he represented. It was not possible to voice his sympathy, and so he counseled patience, and again patience. Last night Rasul Khan had said that Patience was dying and that Reform was coming to her funeral. To-day Fraser was making a special report to his Government.

The bulk of the Dakhara people were concerned in the plot to depose the Maharaja, and an unascertained proportion of the five thousand irregulars which composed the Army was ready to join them. The British Resident earnestly desired to know whether it was his duty to inform the Maharaja of what had come to his knowledge. Under such circumstances, he suggested that it would save further complications if Rasul Khan were warned in good time to escape from his brother's territory.

AT THIS point the report broke off. Fraser leaped up and ran out on to the veranda, for shots were crackling briskly and continuously from the direction of the Palace. There was no doubt that the revolt had broken out. The Residency servants thronged the compound, curious to see how their Sahib would act in this emergency. He, fully expecting that the Maharaja would come to him for protection should he manage to escape the enemy, dashed down to the gates, and waited. Again came the sound of firing, and presently a bullet ripped through the trees over his head, making it evident that the pursuit was turning in the direction of the Residency.

The evening was very dark and still. Nothing could be seen outside the compound, but the noise of a great commotion and a thunderous roar of voices were approaching, growing momentarily in volume. Then from the cover of some roadside scrub burst three men, running for their lives. One stumbled and fell, and the foremost fugitive turned back, in spite of the whistling bullets, helped him to rise, and dragged him onward.

The pursuers were barely a hundred yards in the rear now, and some of them were pausing to take aim. Fraser stepped aside, the three exhausted men tumbled pell-mell on to British territory, and instantly the gates clanged together.

One of the three, a heavily-built, elderly man, a personage of high position at the Palace, lay groaning where he had dropped, and the Resident bent over him with concern. Then he jumped round to look at the other self-invited guests, startled by soft laughter which told him that it was Rasul Khan and not the Maharaja who was within his gates.

"The old chap is only winded, Colonel," the young man informed him composedly. "We had a bit of a sprint at the last, as you may guess."

Fraser shook his head at the unabashed culprit, but there was no time to talk. Fired by the excitement of the chase, the soldiers had altogether forgotten what was due to the might and majesty of the British Resident and they were hammering on the gates and letting loose warlike cries and wondrous threats on the outer darkness.

Fraser waited until the refugees were safely under the shelter of his roof, and then he ordered that the gates should be reopened. A native officer had arrived by this time and had beaten back a few of the overzealous with the flat of his sword. No attempt was made to set foot upon the inviolable ground, but the yielding up of Rasul Khan and his

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companions was demanded in the name of his Highness, the Maharaja.

Fraser made answer briefly, but with scathing effect, speaking as to one who knows. He mentioned bullets, the scars of which on the wrong side of the Residency walls would have to be explained. He pointed out the whereabouts of the British flag, invisible by reason of the darkness, but nevertheless very surely and efficiently floating over the heads of the hunted conspirators. He recommended that this latter circumstance should be reported to the Maharaja without delay.

CHILLED with awe, the soldiery departed. The Resident went back to the bungalow, perplexed, and troubled also as to what developments might occur within the next few hours.

Two elderly reformers were squatted on the floor of the smoking-room, beating their breasts and picturesquely making moan over their cruel fate. Rasul Khan was smoking, and thinking hard. His fine eyes twinkled as his worried host stalked in.

"Beastly hard luck, wasn't it?" he said. "Everything was fixed up as right as could be for to-morrow night, and then some skulking brute split on us. Thorny is the path of the reformer, eh, Colonel?"

Fraser settled into a low chair, and started a cigar with the fervent hope that it would soothe his jarred nerves into something like the enviable calmness which was evidently being enjoyed by this runaway political agitator.

"My Government wouldn't have countenanced you," he said.

Rasul Khan smiled.

"Go *on!*" he said amiably. "Success would have meant nine points of the law to me, and the tenth would have been the exposure of the putrid methods and habits of my royal brother."

The Resident felt in every bone of his body that trouble was coming for him, hotfoot, and the British lion in him was getting ready to roar.

"Only, you failed!" he said unkindly.

"Rub it in!" responded Rasul Khan. "As you say, I have failed—and Dakhara must go to the wall. We must be exiles, I and these who were with me. I suppose we are safe for the present?"

The Resident dashed his cigar to the ground and sprang out of his chair.

"All I know is that you've put me in the deuce of a hole, my good fellow!" he cried impatiently. "You've been breaking the very laws that I am here to uphold. I'm hanged if I can tell you how much to count upon!"

"Political refugees find shelter under the British flag," advised Rasul Khan, showing great proficiency in the manufacture of smoke-rings.

The elderly counselors listened with bated breath, their faces gray and haggard with suspense. They knew their Maharaja —the other two men only guessed at him.

"Refugees be dashed!" growled Fraser. "That was good enough at the gates, with an armed rabble to fend off, but wait till the thing comes to be argued in cold blood——"

"Ours?" suggested Rasul Khan lightly.

"It will be pointed out that Dakhara is under the protection of my Government; we are here with the object of supporting the Maharaja. You make war against him, you make war against us. You might just as well have taken refuge in the Palace. Your brother is no fool—he'll see that like a shot."

"Ah! Then you give us up?" inquired Rasul Khan.

The Resident turned upon him with clenched fists and a face that was almost as red as his rumpled hair. Rasul Khan looked at him very kindly, for he thought he knew the English, and his trust in them was rooted too deeply for upheaval.

"Sorry," he said, with his hand on the other man's shoulder.

The Resident grunted, and wrested himself away with an ungracious movement.

"I shall see the Maharaja and make terms for you," he said. "You've had your fun, and now you'll have to take your gruel; but he shall run straight this time, if he never has before."

"We are in your hands," said Rasul Khan gravely, and seated himself again.

THE Resident had no need to seek an audience at the Palace. Within an hour, accompanied by a richly-uniformed body-guard, the Maharaja sought entrance to the Residency and was conducted with ceremony to the large reception-room, which was hastily illuminated for the occasion. Fraser marched to the interview sternly, prepared for a tug of war that might involve such

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plain speaking as would seem inexcusable at headquarters. The Maharaja beamed upon him, his fat brown face creased and shining under his gaudy turban.

"Ah, Colonel-sahib," he said genially, "sorry to trouble you. My brother is here —sillee young fool! I have come for him."

The Resident informed his Highness that Rasul Khan claimed to be a political refugee and, as such, entitled to the protection of the British flag. The Government would have to be consulted.

"What for, eh?" asked his Highness with bland surprise. "Can not I manage my own affair, eh? Since when have your Government protected rebels, eh?"

"Time immemorial," blurted out Fraser. "And look here, your Highness, you must take a few things into consideration in dealing with this case. Your brother was in the Imperial Cadet Corps, and he is personally known to the Viceroy."

"I also," said the Maharaja; "he was my representative. That's all."

"But—" said the Resident, and he set forth other advantages of which Rasul Khan was master. True, the Indian Government had so far been deaf to protests, but the Viceroy was a man, and he would remember this other man who had been in the Oxford eleven and who was as good a bat as ever came East; and he would listen to the story he had to tell. What that story would be, Fraser hinted at with a masterly air of concern. The Maharaja was moved by it. He insisted upon shaking hands.

"You and I are very good friends, Colonel-sahib, eh? We don't want any one breeding mischief, and lie-telling, do we? What do you propose, eh?"

"A slight punishment, and then pardon, would prove both your power and your clemency," said the Resident.

The Maharaja nodded, resuming his usual conciliatory smile.

"Verree good!" he said cordially. "My brother, poor fool! he is young and he stirs up this *tamasha* for a game of toys. The others—pouf!—nothing! The scabbard without the sword."

"A year's imprisonment, followed by banishment?" inquired the Resident.

"No, no. Too much for young fool—six months," responded his Highness. "After, I will extend my royal clemency. He shall go, or stay—it is all one. I do not fear him."

The Resident was intensely relieved. He promised to lay stress on the merciful treatment of the rebels in his report of the affair. Then he made a few more stipulations.

"Of course you won't put 'em to rigorous imprisonment—or with criminals?"

"To goodness-gracious, no, Colonel-sahib! I have honor in my brother. He is a royal captive. His counselors shall go with him and share lenient treatment, eh?"

Forthwith Fraser brought in the three and acquainted them with the terms of surrender. The Maharaja looked on with good-humored contempt.

"Sillee young fool," he observed; "verree sillee young fool!"

Some of the Resident's self-satisfaction ran away, like water off melting ice, when he met Rasul Khan's eyes. All the prisoners were mute, and the elder men trembled.

"Six months," repeated the Maharaja, "then go where you please. Be sillee fool again, if you like, my boy. The Viceroy, my good friend, he will agree everything—you understand? Fraseer, he very pleased —you understand?"

He led the way to the compound, the surrendered prisoners following. In a few minutes the cavalcade was on its way back to the Palace, the wild body-guard firing a few shots as they went, to proclaim their triumph.

THE Resident passed an uneasy night. He thought of Rasul Khan a thousand times. "What the deuce could the fellow expect?" he demanded of himself when he woke for the twentieth time, bathed in a cold sweat. "And what more could I have done? Sentence is leniency itself!" He was genuinely convinced that he had made a most excellent arrangement—and he could not rest, sleeping or waking.

In the morning he visited the Palace and inquired where the rebels were to be imprisoned.

"It is not a prison," answered his Highness with playful rebuke. "Did I not say that he should be treated as royal? He goes to a palace. He shall have attendants, not guards."

"My Government will be pleased," said Fraser mechanically. "May I add the name of the palace?"

"Pabiala," was the ready answer. "You have heard of Pabiala? It is beautiful, it is select. Six months—sillee young fool have

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time to think. I make him Governor of palace, if he likes," and with this jest the Maharaja rose, as if to end the audience.

The Resident requested permission to visit the prisoners before they set out on their journey. His Highness regretted that it was impossible—they had already started.

"*Arree,*" he said pleasantly, "six months, —what is it?" His extended hand seemed full of assurances, and Fraser had to go away and manufacture more sops for his conscience.

Pabiala, he knew, was a city of ruins. It was two days' march away, and the straight road to it ran through the desert. Once, it was said, the country round about was fruitful, but the sand encroached and devoured it piecemeal. Then the Maharaja of the time built himself the present capital, and he and his people came away across the conquering sand and left beautiful Pabiala, with its gardens, its temples, its palaces, and its marble domes, to be the haunt for the jackal and the rats.

There was an aged *boree* squatting just outside the veranda when Fraser reached home. How he ever passed the compound gates was a mystery, and the Resident shouted wrathfully for some one to come and offer explanations. The wizened old man, with his brown face and long, white beard, cowered before the lord-sahib and pointed to his trumpery goods, all set out upon the steps—brown Windsor soap packets of violet powder, jet crosses, and shaving-brushes. He whined and besought and, incredibly, no servants came to the master's call. Fraser threw down a coin and pointed the way to the gates.

The old man thrust something into his hand, packed his goods with amazing celerity, and was gone before the Resident realized that he was in possession of a linen shirt-cuff, which had been torn off at the gathers. Penciled on it was a succession of dots and dashes. It was a code message, almost too blurred by handling to be deciphered easily. No one but Rasul Khan could have written it, and it meant—*Help!*

When the Resident shouted again, his body-servant was with him instantly.

"Mayat Ullah," he said, "we go hunting!"

Elaborate preparations were made for a hunting expedition. Extra horses were to be taken, laden with water and camp equipment. Fraser sent word to the Palace that he would give himself a week upcountry now that quiet was restored.

HE TOOK the road to Amrulla at sundown, and followed it till darkness fell. Then a fire was lighted and left for the spies of the Maharaja to watch, while the rescue party toiled all night toward Pabiala. They reached the edge of the desert in the morning, and found the tracks of men and horses.

"At a foot's pace," said Mayat Ullah, examining the tracks; "time, and time enough, for us, Colonel-sahib."

Thereafter the sand covered all traces. They took a circular route and lost the track. Night came, and Mayat Ullah traveled by guidance of the stars. They ran short of water, and the horses began to fail. At dawn the snowy domes of Pabiala rose against the north.

They walked the exhausted horses into the shadows of the deserted capital and found a great tank with an abundance of water. In some of the weed-grown gardens were fig-trees and fresh grass, and there the camp was pitched. There were two silent, blank-eyed priests serving the shrine of Kali, but not another living soul trod the streets of the dead city.

Curiously, the unguarded palace was in a state of perfect preservation. Fraser traversed its endless halls and corridors and found everywhere the same snowy, gleaming silences—nothing sinister, nothing even doubtful. It seemed to him quite possible that he had made a fool of himself.

He went into a little balcony screened with marble that was carved to lace-work, and found that it jutted upon a huge courtyard in the very center of the palace buildings. Within was a great, round hall, windowless, save for stone-latticed apertures high up near the roof. The balcony also commanded a view of the whole city and some miles of the desert approach.

Fraser rolled up his coat for a pillow and went to sleep then and there. He slept for hours, and then he was awakened by the voice of Mayat Ullah, posted high above him.

"Sahib! They come, they come!"

Far away he saw the column approaching. Presently it entered the town, and under the eyes of the watchers climbed the steep cobbled road, straight to the palace. Barred gates in the twenty-foot wall of mar-

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ble slabs were opened, and into the hidden courtyard they filed, men and horses, weary, dusty and footsore. The two priests of Kali were there, and they opened the one door of the huge round building, and stood aside.

Long, inarticulate cries, whimperings, tremulous moans, broke out. It was as if the bottomless pit had been uncovered and there seemed to be a rush from within, for the escort raised their guns threateningly and a shot was fired by way of warning. A stale, clammy odor, the very essence of corruption, floated up to the balcony.

Rasul Khan stood like a rock, gazing into the building, his two companions crouched at his feet. The officer in command took him by the shoulder and attempted to force him through the doorway. He promptly knocked the man down, but he came at him again, this time with drawn sword, and tried to urge him forward at the point of it. Fraser flung himself out of the palace and was making for the open gates of the courtyard at a pace which he has never excelled. Suddenly he was in the midst of the escort, and the men fell back amazed. The power of the British had seemed very far away from that secret place in Pabiala!

The Resident came opposite the door of the round building, and the sight of the interior smote him full in the eyes so that he reeled and sickened, and horror took him by the throat. The half-light filtered in upon piteous creatures—lepers that had once been men and now were of the living dead! Two of the missing enemies of the Maharaja were there, not yet marred beyond recognition. It was the royal lazar-house, the monstrous secret of the dead city!

Mayat Ullah appeared and volleyed threats and commands at the scared priests, so that they slid the door back into its place and barred it hastily.

Fraser pulled himself together and addressed the officer in command of the column. He was white to the lips, his blue eyes glared, and his voice was unusually low in tone. Mayat Ullah, who knew his Sahib, felt fresh awe of him.

The prisoners, it seemed, had appealed to the Resident, and on consideration their sentence was to be revised. They were to be returned immediately from whence they came.

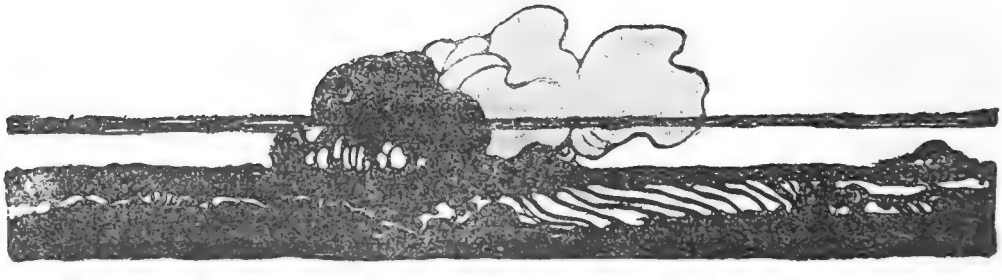
"There will be a writing to show from the Maharaja?" questioned the officer sullenly. He guessed at the facts, and was inclined to dare resistance.

Then Fraser's voice was uplifted and the miserable white walls shouted with echoes:

"To the Residency! Right about turn! Quick march!"

Only one man, but the escort never hesitated, for they saw the hundred thousand bayonets of the British Raj behind him. Out they clattered, the crestfallen officer jostling to take his rightful place at their head. Within half an hour they were clear of Pabiala and on the road to the Residency, the Resident's eyes upon them all the way.

During Fraser's absence the revolt had broken out again, and a stray shot saved the Maharaja all troublesome explanations. They had given him an extravagant funeral, and when Rasul Khan rode into the town at the side of the British Resident, the Palace and the State were at his disposal.



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Thicker than Blood

by Thomas P Byron

WITHERS, Wilshire and I had arrived from Johannesburg the day before and were leaving South Africa definitely on account of business depression; the stranger had got in from Tulear that very morning on Paraskeva's very dirty little cattle-boat. We were sitting in the garden of the Cardozo on Reuben Point.

It was a hot, still day and Delagoa Bay lay like a sheet of glass. The tide was out, the fishing craft lay high and dry on their beam-ends on the beach directly at our feet, a steamer with a heavy list to port, her decks piled sky-high in the Teutonic fashion, plowed through the dead waters, her funnel painting a motionless bar of smut across the blue sky. Lorenzo Marques was a white glare of a city, bordered by a network of spars and funnels along the wharves, and lay directly between us and the sun dropping behind the vague line of the far blue hills.

I had been scanning the *Transvaal Leader*. There was the usual grist of world news—the chronic scare of German invasion, accounts of race-riots in Prague, an offer of a Dreadnaught by New Zealand; in Johannesburg the first performance of "An Englishman's Home" had been received with wild enthusiasm, and there had been nine cases of sand-bagging the very night we had left.

We discussed all these things and then Wilshire read us extracts from a jingo book, "The Kaiser's Spies—Plotting the Downfall of England." Then Withers, who was a West Australian, took an inning with selections from a weird serial in an Australian magazine in which some second-sighted scribe described the coming invasion of Australia by the Japs and poured hot-shot into the mother-country and imperialism.

Withers spoke bitterly of the Japanese Alliance, told of the frigidness of the Australian reception to the Prince compared with the wild welcome given the American fleet, and disloyally drank a bottle of bad Collares to the day when the Great Commonwealth would cut loose from the Empire and ally herself with Uncle Sam against the Yellow Peril.

Wilshire turned an apoplectic purple and pleaded for the preservation of ties of blood.

"Look at those riots in Prague!" he said. "Things like that are signs of the times—rumblings of the wrath to come. Austria is a house divided against itself and must fall. The kinship of blood is lacking. For the same reason the Empire must hold to-

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gether. The ruling element is British and homogeneous. Blood is thicker than water, I tell you, and that is the tie that makes nations great and united. No nation whose unity is not founded upon it can long endure."

"How about Switzerland? How about the United States of America?" demanded Withers.

"Community of interest. That is what holds French, German and Italian people together in Switzerland. That is what binds together the thousand and one components of the American Republic. When that tie fails there will be chaos. Look what a tremendous row they had over slavery once. Am I not right?" he demanded of the man from Tulear.

"I don't know," answered the stranger slowly; "perhaps it is true that under an Empire different races can not live in unity. A caste-like social system forbids the necessary blending. But in the warp and woof of a republic there is a tie that is neither community of interest nor kinship of blood. I can not explain it to you, but I can tell you a story that illustrates it. Would you like to hear it? Its beginning was in the bloodiest battle of the American 'row over slavery,' and it ended on the veld of the Transvaal only a few years ago."

"Go ahead!" we chorused, for our curiosity was aroused.

The man from Tulear stretched himself at his ease and began:

"I am not a psychologist, so I can not explain this story to you; I can not even comprehend the reason for the acts of Piet Nouwelaarts and Terence Rafferty. I can only tell you the story as it happened—as I heard it from Nouwelaarts and Rafferty themselves.

"During the war between the United States and Spain, Rafferty, who lived in a place called San Simón, Arizona, happened to be in the hospital. A horse rolled on him the very day he was about to enlist and nearly mashed him into a jelly. Before he could recover the war was over, and Rafferty was bitterly inconsolable, especially when he listened to the war-yarns of certain of his friends who had served in the First Volunteer Cavalry of which you may have heard."

"Not I," we all chorused again.

The man from Tulear smiled and continued:

RAFFERTY was a Texan from his spurs to the peak of his sombrero, with nothing Irish about him except his name and the merest touch of brogue when he was highly humorous or was out to kill somebody, and when he came to the British concentration camp at New Orleans he attracted the attention of a sergeant named Binks. You recollect the camp where they gathered horses and mules before they shipped them to South Africa. It was there that Rafferty came with a load of horses and Binks tried to persuade him to go to the war.

"I'd like to go to war—just once," admitted Rafferty. "An' then I'd take delight in killin' Dutchmen. I hate Dutchmen. They're tight and cautious and conservative and take half an hour to think. Besides, I don't like sauerkraut; and a Dutchman killed my father."

"How was that?" asked Binks.

"It was at Gettysburg—in the Devil's Den. They met in the underbrush and stuck bayonets into each other until they both looked like pincushions with the pins pulled out. He was a Confederate, my dad, and he lived for thirty years after. But he never was a well man. Them bayonet wounds broke open again and again. I think the Dutchy got away, too. If I ever meet up with him or any of his condemned descendants I'll cut 'em up into sauerkraut and stew 'em alive in Tabasco sauce!"

"This South African fuss will be open season on Dutchmen," assured Binks. "A Boer is a degenerate Dutchman. There's more than a million of 'em there, and we're going to kill every lawst one of them. It will be like shooting pheasants."

Rafferty's sporting blood was aroused and he went on the next mule-transport.

He enlisted in the ——th Lancers. That was fate, for if Terry had joined— say, Hutton's M. I. and been thrown in with a lot of your West Australians he would have been a round peg in a round hole, would have gone through the war like a comet and probably come out with a commission. But he didn't.

He enlisted in the ——th, fresh out from home with their lances and badly sighted carbines, and was an object of odium from the first. For he found to his surprise that he was the subject of bitter criticism both as an American and as one of Irish blood, and although he scarcely heard of the des-

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perate valor of Hart's Brigade in the Natal campaign he heard a great deal about the Red Cross Irishmen who threw their badges away for a gun as soon as they had crossed the Portuguese frontier.

In addition to this, Rafferty was insubordinate and had a nasty habit of sneering at men who rode with short stirrups. But he was a born scout.

The battue of Boers, so eagerly expected, proved to be elusive, and Rafferty, as restless and unhappy and impotent as a fly stuck in fly-paper, grew to hate them with a fanatical venom when he found that they were practically invisible and could shoot like fun at a thousand yards. He had expected to go cantering up to Pretoria, slaying them by legions on the way. A couple of good fights cheered his soul, however, and after Paardeburg he was respected if not liked by all his messmates.

IT WAS a few weeks after Diamond Hill that he gave the ——th Lancers what he called a demonstration of "high-life."

"This is it," he said to a couple of comrades, surreptitiously displaying a small bottle. "'Tis really an acid, but in the Southwest we call it 'high-life.' 'Tis concentrated amusement, and in the cattle-country it takes the place of circuses and comic oprys, relieving the monotony of the lonely cowpuncher's life, besides giving him local color for theses on equine insanity. When dropped on a hawss, it freezes the hide instantly, giving a delightful sensation such as being stabbed with a red-hot poker."

"I dares yer ter give the Capting's harse a dose," whispered Private Smith.

"You're on," said Terry blandly, "if I gets a good chance I gives him the hull—— bottle. I has three reasons. I wants to see if the Captain's hawss will show signs of life; I wants to see if Cap. hisself will show signs of life; I wants to see if the features of T. Rafferty, Esq., can still wrinkle in hilarity. You watch me, sport, an' you'll see somethin'!"

At the time they were scouting along the railroad some distance over in the direction of Middelburg looking for the small, detached Boer commandos of which the country was full.

Rafferty applied the "high-life" and won out on all three of his bets.

The Captain's Argentinian steed jumped high, forward and sideways at one and the same time and, with the Captain hanging amorously about his neck, skipped off to look at the scenery up Rhodesia way while T. Rafferty, Esq., shook the cartridges out of his belt with unhallowed laughter.

A moment later he sank the spurs into his horse and galloped after the Captain. On the edge of the brown horizon toward which the Captain was headed he had glimpsed a number of black dots.

A LITTLE later, some miles from the rest of their command, they had the displeasure of surrendering to a half-dozen shaggy-whiskered Boers, who hustled them quickly across the veld. A couple of hours after dark they came to a small farmhouse and entered a small, dirt-floored living-room, picking their way carefully over a number of recumbent forms.

At one end of the room a man sat, his face buried in his arms on a table on which a couple of candles sputtered. Near him a man in khaki was seated on a chair. This latter rose as Rafferty's face came in the light of the candles.

"Sergeant!" he cried. "Have they got you——"

He stopped suddenly and then went on again—"My word! I thought you were my sergeant."

"Think again and harder," sneered Rafferty.

"Silence!" commanded his Captain. "How dare you speak that way to an officer!"

Rafferty gave an insubordinate snort and seated himself on the floor. The leader of their captors approached the table and spoke to the man with his face in his arms, who grunted a single word without so much as raising his head. Rafferty's Captain was given a chair and the two British officers entered into conversation.

Terry heard the stranger say that he was a captain in the Ennistymon Light Horse. They talked about the war.

At that time the president and treasury of the Transvaal were sliding back and forth along the railway ready to slip across the Portuguese frontier for safety, and every day brought its rumor that Kruger had left the Transvaal to go to Europe to plead for intervention.

The British officers agreed that, although

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the war might be prolonged for some time, the end was clearly in sight and, careless as to whether their captors might hear or no, spoke in tremendous contempt of the indisposition of the Boers to fight at close quarters.

"They are bushwhackers, that is all," said the Lancer. "It isn't in the Dutch make-up to stand up and fight in the open. That has always been their history. Look how badly the Dutch troops behaved at Waterloo."

The man at the table had raised his head as they voiced their scorn for their enemies, and at these words he pushed his chair back with a quick motion and stood up and looked at them. He was short, stocky and bearded, and his eyes gleamed in the candlelight.

"Sooner or later," he said in clear, nasal English that thrilled Rafferty, "when an Englishman talks of war he will speak of Waterloo. Why, I can never understand. Other nations, when they boast of victories, speak of battles that they have won—if not against odds, at least single-handed. A German can boast of Sedan, a Frenchman of Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena, or Montmirail where the odds were six to one against them. Small nations—there is not one among them that can not tell of some heroic struggle against a stronger oppressor. But you English can only speak of Waterloo where the allies were two and a half to one against the French—where even in Wellington's army three-fifths of the troops were Dutch, Belgians and Hanoverians. Your own allies outnumbered you five to one, yet you English take all the credit and boast forever of Waterloo!

"Why? Why? Shall I tell you? It is because that in the history of modern times you have never fought alone or against odds! It is the same story—in Spain, at Waterloo, in the Crimea. You seek to exalt your own glory by throwing mud upon the friends who fought by your side!

"Why do you not speak of battles that you have won, if not against stronger numbers, at least alone? Because you have none to boast of! I pity you. England, great and powerful as she is, can not tell of a single battle that she has won against an equal enemy alone and single-handed. You may be great upon the sea, but you are supremely pitiful on land!"

The British officers had listened at first with contempt and then with growing rage. The Captain of the Ennistymons would have interrupted him, but the Boer continued with a passionate bitterness:

"You are right in what you say of South Africa. The war is over here, or will be soon. Even now Kruger may have gone to Europe, and the Boers will *not* stand up and fight. I have seen places evacuated with scarcely a shot fired that were well-nigh impregnable. They feared to be flanked. It is easy to flank a foe when you are ten to his one. But do not boast of it! If there is glory here in South Africa it is not to you who are the victors. And do not boast of Waterloo or slander the Dutch who were your allies there—you have never won a battle alone or won one against odds——"

Rafferty's Captain interrupted him.

"You are an American?" he asked with bitter scorn.

The bearded man raised his head proudly. "I am!" he answered.

"Well, what great battles has your country ever fought? Where have you ever fought a battle such as Waterloo?"

The eyes of the bearded man shot flame and he waved his clenched fist in a gesture of pride.

"Forty-seven years ago to-day," he said, "we fought a battle where the casualties were practically the same as at Waterloo. There were no allies—it was American against American, and the weaker in numbers was beaten. But the battle was not decisive. No! There were a half-dozen before it and a half-dozen more that followed, that were only a trifle less bloody, and the war was not decided until the weaker side was completely exhausted. There was a war—a war in which every able-bodied man was a soldier—a war that cost over a million lives and took four years to finish! No nation in the world save the French can tell of one like it! There you would have found men who would stand up and fight—Dutchmen, too. My father fought at Gettysburg. In the Devil's Den he and an Irish Rebel drove bayonets into each other until the blood poured from their wounds like water and both fell unconscious——"

Terence Rafferty sprang to his feet with blazing eyes.

"It was your father killed mine!" he cried hoarsely.

The bearded man stopped short and

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stared at him. His bitterness and wrath fell from him suddenly.

"Then it was yours that killed mine," he said slowly.

They looked at each other for a moment, white-faced and tense, and then with a gesture of despair the Boer seated himself at his table and buried his face in his arms.

The officers regarded them in amazed silence, the men on the floor who had raised their heads, their eyes gleaming at the strange quarrel, sank back again one by one, and Rafferty seated himself again with his back to the wall and stared out the open door into the night.

THE British officers did not speak again, but after a considerable time began to doze in their chairs. There was not a sound save the faint tramping of the sentry as he passed the door, the sputtering of the candles, and the deep breathing as one by one the men in the farmhouse fell asleep.

Rafferty thought of home. He could hear the voice of his father with its thick South Ireland brogue telling of the battle in the underbrush. And here was he after forty-seven years—on the veld of the Transvaal—a prisoner of the son of the man who had slain his father.

After a long time Rafferty turned and looked at the Boer Commandant. This one had raised his head from the table and was looking steadily at Rafferty. Terry noticed that a pistol lay on the table before him and that he played with it from time to time.

"My father often wondered what became of yours," said the Boer slowly. "He died of his bayonet wounds, but not until years after. They kept breaking open again and again."

"The same with my father's," answered Rafferty. "He died in '93."

"And mine in '91. He often wondered about the other—he knew that he was Irish and that he was in a Louisiana regiment."

"Mine knew yours was Dutch, too," said Rafferty scornfully.

"My father was no Dutchman!" said the Commandant proudly. "He was of Dutch descent and he spoke broken English, but he was no Dutchman. Why should a man be obliged to speak pure English to be a good American? My folks have been American for one hundred and eighty years. They fought in the Revolution, in 1812, and in Mexico as well as in the Civil War. I was in the Spanish fuss myself."

"I was in the hospital then," said Rafferty bitterly. "A hawss rolled on me."

"You come from Texas?"

"Born in Texas. But I been livin' in Arizona."

"My home's in Pennsylvania."

"Never been nearer there than New O'leans."

"I been in Arizona. Stationed once at Fort Grant. I was in the regulars five years."

"The —— you say!" said Rafferty eagerly. "I used to punch cattle for the San Simón outfit. How did you come to come over here?"

"I came over with some other Americans to get in the fight. Most of 'em were of Irish descent, too. And how do you come here—fighting against the republics and for the people that have always been the enemies of yours?"

"I came to kill Dutchmen!" said Terry venomously.

A ghost of a smile flitted over the Commandant's face.

"Killed any yet?" he queried.

Rafferty turned purple. "Never a dashed one that I was sure of!" he said bitterly.

"Well, I've killed some Irishmen. Hart's Brigade! Say, at Spion Kop and Colenso we sloughed 'em up! At Pieter's Hill, too. But they kept on coming. The Dublin Fusiliers was the best of the lot."

Rafferty did not answer, and after a long silence the Commandant spoke again.

"I wish my father was alive so I could tell him— Say, what was your father's name?"

"Patrick Rafferty."

"Mine was called Piet Nouwelaarts. I was named for him. I wish he was alive so I could tell him. The very day of Gettysburg—here on the veld of the Transvaal, after forty-seven years! I bet they'd shake hands now if they were to hear about it and meet."

Rafferty opened his eyes wide and considered.

"Mebbe they would," he said finally.

The Commandant buried his face in his arms again, and again there was silence. Each time that the sentry passed the door Terry counted. The man's pace was regular and he passed at regular intervals. There was no sound save the breathing of the

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sleepers. Rafferty calculated. He could rise to his feet, bound lightly over the recumbent forms, meet the sentry just at the moment he passed the door, dash him to the ground and make a break for liberty. There were other Boers outside, but he was willing to take his chance with them.

Terry was not the man to hesitate, but, once his plan was formed, he rose and leaped with a single motion. At his first move Piet Nouwelaarts sat up straight, his pistol clutched in his hand.

"I am lost!" thought Terry, but he did not stop and, crossing the room in a couple of bounds, struck the sentry to the ground, expecting each instant a bullet in his back. But it was not until he was safe away in the darkness that hoarse shouts and a single report came to his ears. A mile or so away he stopped.

"He had me!" he muttered to himself. "Why didn't he shoot? His father killed mine. Mine killed his. *Why—why—why didn't he shoot?*"

OFF to the west he could see signals flashing from the top of a *kopje* and he made his way toward it. After an hour or two he came upon a cavalry encampment and was challenged and taken prisoner by a sentry. He was taken to a camp-fire and a man who was standing beside it turned as they approached.

"This is a prisoner, sergeant—" began the sentry and then he stopped.

Terry looked at the sergeant and the sergeant looked at him. The fire shone clearly on their faces. Barring a swagger and a devilish mustache that Terry lacked, and some three inches of height that the sergeant lacked, Terry might have been the sergeant and the sergeant Terry.

"Who are you?" demanded Rafferty fiercely.

"Sergeant Terence Rafferty of the Ennistymon Light Horse; and who the divvle might you be?"

"Terence Rafferty of San Simón, Arizona."

"Bedad," said the Sergeant, laughing, "you must be the son of me American uncle and me own furrst cousin!"

"I reckon I am," answered Terry, and they shook hands solemnly.

"Sure 'twas me own Captain was prisoner wid ye," said the Sergeant after Terry had told his story to a commissioned officer. "He tuk ye for mesilf. Why didn't ye bring him along? Sure ye'd best do as the Captain says and stay wid us for a day or two. 'Tis plenty of mounts we have. The ——th Lancers is scoutin' same as we are, and ye never could foind thim in the world. Stick wid us for a day or two, Terry, me bhoy, and plaze God we'll have a small fight for the honor of the Ould Sod."

THE next morning, Terry, riding with the Ennistymons, assisted at the burning of the very house where he had been prisoner the night before. The commando fled after firing a few shots, and the Ennistymons, separating, scoured the country for fugitives. Terry and his cousin rode in the van of the scouts and far ahead of them, for the bare brown veld offered no chance of ambush.

It was a day when the earth and air were cold and chill and the sun burned as though refracted through a sun-glass, and the Ennistymons raked over a goodly stretch of veld. Late in the afternoon they came to a rolling country cut up by deep ravines. At the bottom of these *kloofs* were tiny *sluits* of running water.

The Sergeant suddenly reined in his horse.

"Terry," he cried softly, "I just saw a man dodge down the ravine yonder. Do you stay here and I'll ride down below him and chase him up the ravine. He daren't fire. He's seen our scouts and knows a shot will bring the whole troop down upon him. He'll run up the ravine and will come out here. You can get him. He's afoot. Keep a sharp lookout and pot him if he takes to the open."

"Good enough," assented Terry and the Sergeant put spurs to his horse.

Rafferty dismounted, picked out a position where he could command the whole width of the *kloof*, seated himself upon a boulder and waited.

In less than ten minutes a man, running desperately, splashed through the water of the *sluit* and began to climb the bank of the ravine directly to where Terry sat. Not until he was within a dozen yards of him did he see the grim figure that waited, drawing a bead on him.

Then he stopped short and threw his head back. He was covered with dirt, his whole frame panted from exertion, his bearded face was haggard and desperate, and

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blanched with despair at the sight of Terry.

"It's you, is it?" he said quietly.

"Yes, it's me," said Terry.

"Well, the game is up. Shoot!"

"Not I," said Rafferty, lowering his gun. "Scoot!"

Nouwelaarts limped wearily up the remaining distance. Some distance away they could hear the rattle of musketry fire.

"I guess they've got my commando," he said bitterly.

"I guess so. Hit the trail quick while they're busy. Take my hawss."

The hoofs of his horse dashing fire from tiny boulders, Sergeant Rafferty came galloping up on the other side of the ravine.

"You've got him, Terry!" he cried delightedly as he dropped from his horse.

"——!" he screamed as the Boer leaped to the saddle of Terry's steed.

The Sergeant jerked his carbine from the boot.

"Let him go!" commanded Terry. "Ride for it, you fool!"

Nouwelaarts, who had hesitated, dug his heels into the horse's ribs at the command and darted away. The cousins faced each other across the ravine.

"Drop that gun or I'll shoot you!" grated Terry fiercely.

"You couldn't, lad. Blood is thicker than water!" said Sergeant Terence Rafferty of the Ennistymon Light Horse, leveling his carbine at the fleeing Boer.

"So is molasses!" muttered Terence Rafferty of San Simón, Arizona, and his gun spoke a fraction of a second before that of his cousin.

The Sergeant fell heavily on his gun. Terry stared at him, white-faced. The features so like his own contorted in hate and scorn and agony; he coughed a red, bubbly stream as he gurgled two words:

"Thraithor—Renegade!"

Then he lay silent and accusing.

"I've killed a part of meself!" whispered Terry. "Traitor! Renegade! I am that!"

He turned his face to where a half-dozen of the Ennistymons were galloping over to ascertain the cause of the firing.

"It will soon be over," he thought.

The voice of Nouwelaarts aroused him from a sort of stupor. The latter had ridden back and tugged at his shoulder.

"Quick, lad!" he urged. "Mount behind me. The horse is fresh. They can't catch us. They have to cross the ravine."

"I must face them," muttered Rafferty.

"No! No! Think of home! Quick!"

Terry leaped up behind him and they were away, a few stray bullets of the Ennistymons whistling about their ears.

"Not a one of 'em can shoot from the saddle," said Nouwelaarts.

AT DUSK, when they were long safe from pursuit, Nouwelaarts checked the horse.

"Where to?" he asked.

"Where to?" repeated Rafferty dully.

"Over there is Middelburg," said Nouwelaarts. "Beyond is Portuguese East Africa. The jig is up, lad. What's this—— war to us? A plague on both their houses! We're Americans, lad! Let's go home!"

A distant popping came to their ears.

"'Tis like the Fourth of July!" he continued. "Let 'em celebrate!"

Rafferty dashed the tears from his eyes and roused himself with a sudden determination.

"Home!" he said softly, and they rode on soberly over the veld under the stars—the twain whose fathers had slain each other, knit together by a tie invisible—one that was thicker than blood.

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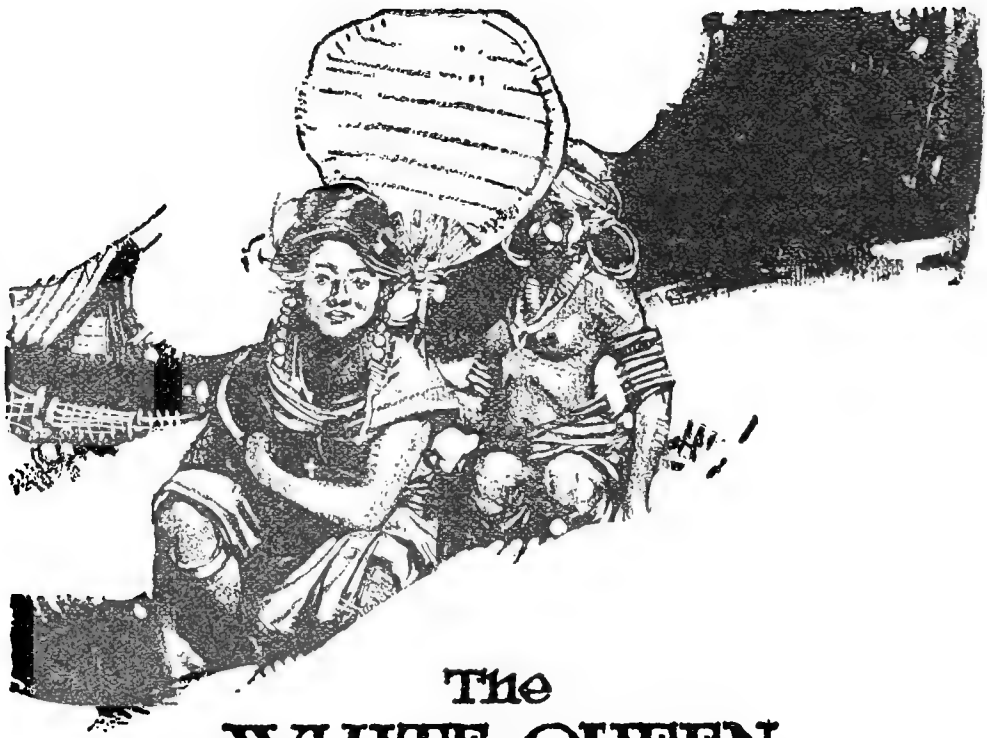

The WHITE QUEEN of SANDAKAN

by James Francis Dwyer

THIS is Shanahan's story. He told it sitting upon an empty crate on the Peninsular and Oriental wharf at Sydney, his blue, unwinking eyes turned upon the dazzling stretch of water that lay between Circular Quay and the Heads. Shanahan was a child of the Fringe, and truth is still prized in the camps of the Outer Rim. Besides, there is corroborative testimony.

"I shipped with Phelan at Yokohama," he remarked casually, "and it was a first mate's job at that. The man who held it before I got the berth was swept overboard one night off Nueshima when a Jap cruiser was nosing the stern of *The Flying Cat*. Phelan couldn't wait to search for him, and the Japs didn't bother. His game? Phelan's game do you mean? Huh! Ask me something easy! Faith, I didn't ask him what his game was when I hired with him. I was playing steerer for a Japanese on the Bund who was working off Birmingham-made Buddhas to the pith-helmeted tourists who left their horse sense in their home towns. The divil bites an Englishman when he gets from underneath the fog. I've seen British ladies wriggle with joy over quarter-clothed josses that would bring all Scotland Yard on the heels of the guy who tried to sell them round Belgravia. But I'm talking of prigs instead of talking of Phelan.

"We bucked down through the China Sea with a wind at our tailboard that would tear the soles off your boots if you lifted your feet too high. Man, it picked up lumps of water that were bigger than the Rock of Cashel, and flung them at us till everything breakable around the deck was the size of toothpicks. *The Flying Cat* gasped and groaned like a Tamil with the cholera, and Phelan clung to the stays and damned the wind in every language from Gaelic to Hindustanee. Every lingo in the

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world lies between those two, let me tell you.

"Faith that was a run! We stood on our end in hollows that made the Grand Canyon look as shallow as a baking-dish, and we cut the clouds into strips with our mast-tops before we had recovered from the sensations of the run downhill. The sun hadn't squinted at us for five days, and Phelan was as anxious as a frog that has tumbled into a snake's burrow.

"'We'll pile *The Cat* up on Borneo if this keeps up,' says he.

"'We're as good as piled then,' says I. 'This wind has got the habit.'

"I guess it was the mention of Borneo that made us talk of the White Queen of Sandakan. You've all heard of her? What? Sure, she was the talk of the Seven Seas! From the Rue de Rivoli at Papeete to the Street of Ten Winds at Hakodate you could hear more yarns about her than you'd find dishonest men in Yokohama, and that's saying a lot. A queen? Of course she was! She had made herself queen of the Dusans, Kadyans, Bisayas, and all the ugly specimens of humanity on the north coast of Borneo, and if rumor spoke the truth she had a hand as heavy as the Buddha at Yeddo, and, faith! his hands are of lead.

"'They say she's beautiful?' said Phelan to me as *The Cat* went up and down like a Coney Island coaster.

"'Beautiful isn't the word,' said I. 'The mate of a Glasgow tramp I met at Nikko said she was more beautiful than the Queen of Sheba and Helen of Troy, but what a Scotchman knows about those persons is another matter intirely!'

"'And she's white too?' said he.

"'Of course,' said I. 'They tell me that the Admiral of the China Squadron says that her name is Finnegan.'

"'I wouldn't doubt that,' growled Phelan, 'but it's like an Englishman to tack an Irish name on any one that's game to grab a bit of land and hang on to it!'

"'But it's British land,' I said, 'and they say she treats the natives shameful.'

"'More power to her!' he snapped, then he looked up at the torn sails and cursed the gale for a full five minutes.

"'We might strike the spot she's camped at,' I remarked.

"'We might,' he growled. 'It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good!'

"'Meaning——' said I.

"'I might make her Mrs. Phelan!' he cried, then he jumped for the wheel and screamed like a ferry-boat in a fog.

"It was too late to save *The Flying Cat*, though. She put her forefoot on a rock that sprang up at us through the foam, and then she threw a somersault like a circus clown. When I came to my senses after butting a rock with the back of me head, Phelan and the French cook were sitting near me on the sand, while *The Cat* was doing a roly-poly act with the breakers about half a mile from the shore.

"'Where are the others?' says I.

"Frenchy screwed up his shoulders and rolled his eyes up to the cloud-wrack. Phelan said nothing. He had a habit of saying nothing.

"Well, after a time, the three of us got on our feet and started to explore the country; and mighty poor country it was. There was a silence around there that made you think the whole neighborhood had knocked off work to go to a funeral. It gave Frenchy cold chills.

"'Bah, zee solitude!' he spluttered. 'It makes my blood to tickle me all cold.'

"He was nervous mighty considerable, and he got worse as we headed up the shore. A bunch of Dyaks, with a wardrobe that'd fit into a tailor's thimble, slipped out of a patch of mangrove and steered for us at a gallop. They were an ugly batch all right. Frenchy put his hand over his heart and bowed eleven times—that was a bow for each one of the brigade, but they didn't take any notice of his politeness. A Dyak knows less than a Yap idol, and they, being wood, know nothing at all.

"Phelan and I clouted one or two of them with our fists, but that didn't do us much good either. They rounded us up with their long spears and started to hustle us inland at a gait that made the cook puff like a cheap gas-wagon.

"'What's the end of it?' said I to Phelan.

"'I don't think you'll ever see Tipperary,' he snapped. 'If that big fellow pricks me with his spear again I'm going to kill him and take the chances!'

"I guess they raced us along for a couple of miles; then we struck a Dyak village that smelt like a glue factory, and every mother's son in the place came out to rubber at us. They were a half-starved-looking lot, and Phelan noticed it quick.

"'They look hungry,' said he. 'Do you

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see the way they stare at the Frog-eater?'

"The cook nearly took a fit when he heard that, and he tried to tuck himself in so that he wouldn't look the fattest of the mob.

"'It's no use,' says Phelan, teasing him; 'don't you know I shipped you at Shanghai because *The Cat* was short of ballast?'

"Well, they rushed us into a long hut, and the cook collapsed on the dirty floor. The top of the place was covered with nipa-palm, and a bunch of dried skulls hung from the roof to let us see that we were here to-day and gone to-morrow, as Phelan translated it. And the smell was more violent there than it was outside, and, be jabers! that's saying a lot.

"A nigger, with a roll of seaweed twisted round his stomach, brought us in a mess of pounded yam and betel-nut, and as we were mighty hungry we tackled it without any grace.

"'I don't know if their love comes from their hearts or their stomachs,' said Phelan, 'but we mustn't be too curious.'

"When we had eaten the stuff, the Captain took a stroll to the door, but a brace of bucks with ugly-looking *parongs* blocked the opening, and Phelan pretended that he had changed his mind.

"'There are places where I'd sooner be,' he said. 'I hate to be eaten. There'll be such a job collecting yourself when Gabriel blows the clarionet on the last day!'

"Just as he said that, a big Dyak comes with a rush through the door and hands Phelan a scrap of paper. Mick read it, then he let out a whistle like a dying curlew and hands it over to me. I believe I have the note somewhere about me now."

Shanahan foraged through his pockets, and discovered amongst a batch of certificates and *pak-a-pu* tickets a soiled piece of paper, which he handed over. The clumsy pencil scrawl was hardly legible, but I made out the following:

These men intend to marry me to one of ye. They bar the Frenchy, so do I. I have been here seven months and I am their queen.

"It's the only communication I've ever had from royalty," said Shanahan, as I handed it back. "That's why I keep it with my papers. Faith! it affected us mightily when we got it in that dirty hut at Sandakan.

"'By the fist of Brian Boru, it's The White Queen!' roared Phelan. 'It's her and no one else!'

"'It sure is,' said I, 'but it's rough on the Frenchman, being barred out of the matrimonial stakes.'

"'What would you have?' yelled Phelan. 'The Frenchman is a foreigner, and like as not this lady is Irish or something near Irish. We're more her equals. I've heard my father say that the Phelans were kings of Connaught before the Sassenach came across and made 'em potato diggers.'

"Well, sir, after that message we were all excitement. Neither Phelan or I was married, and we sat in the hut all day telling each other stories we had heard of the woman who had made herself queen of the head-hunting mongrels on the North Coast.

"'The skipper of a pearl poacher told me she was handsomer than Venus,' said Phelan. 'Isn't it a lump of luck for us? If I'm picked I'll keep Froggy to cook for us. These black devils don't know how to dish up food for a white man.'

"'And I'll keep him if *I'm* picked,' said I, not wishing to appear smaller than Phelan, 'and I'll make you a general, Mick, and give you power to make war on the English. It's meself that's been dying to have a lick at them for many a day.'

"'I'd advise you to wait till you're chosen,' said he coolly. 'You're a man that don't measure much over five-feet-six, while it's myself that stands six-feet-one in my stockings.'

"WE GOT a bit huffy to each other after that. Phelan would sit all day in the corner of the hut dreaming of the Queen and wondering when the right man would be picked. Faith! he was struck on getting her! I spent the three days trying to learn a little of the Dyak lingo from one of the fat bucks that guarded the door, and mighty glad I was afterwards that I had the thirst for knowledge. The fat fellow took a fancy to a penknife that I had in my pocket at the time we were shipwrecked, and I struck a bargain with him. He was an idjut, like all savages, but after much talk I made him understand that I wanted a squint at the Queen, and he grinned like a Chinese joss.

"'Agreed,' said he, 'I'm your man.' Of course he didn't say it in the English tongue, but he made a sound like a nanny-goat sli-

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cding down a sheet of tin, and I knew what it meant.

"'When?' I asked.

"'To-night,' he whispered, and my heart pounded like the motor of a petrol-boat as I sat down to wait.

"Phelan and the Frenchman were snoring comfortably when the Dyak poked me with the end of his spear and I crept out on me hands and knees and followed him through the darkness. We wriggled along to the end of the village, and there he stopped short, and faith! I stopped too. Out of a big bungalow came the sound of a woman singing, and I swallowed nine times before I could shoot a question at the guide.

"'Who's the warbler?' I asked.

"'The Queen,' he whispered. 'She does that every evening.'

"'She does, does she?' said I, and I scratched my head while I listened. You don't know what she was singing, do you? —I mean you would never guess. Faith, it was, 'The Wearing of the Green!' It's a fact!

"Well, I sat there for a few minutes; then I became anxious to see her. A woman singing 'The Wearing of the Green' with a Cork brogue at Sandakan Bay should be worth looking at, thinks I. The Dyak moved in closer to the hut, and then he hunched himself under one of the openings, and I climbed up on his back and looked in. Playing the Peeping Tom stunt isn't a game of mine, but curiosity had a ju-jitsy grip on me just then, and I had to go ahead or choke to death.

"The moment I got my eye on the interior of the apartment the singing ceased, and I thought the Queen had spotted me. But she hadn't. She had spotted something else. One of the five dozen women that were preparing her evening meal was doing something she shouldn't have done, and faith! I witnessed a disturbance that had Donnybrook Fair in the backwater in one jump! The Queen grabbed a stick that was standing beside her throne, and she gave a hop into the middle of the batch and started to use the bludgeon for all she was worth. The mob ducked and feinted and cross-countered, but they didn't have a hope, and when she chased the last one into the night I fell off the back of the Dyak and asked him to carry me to the hut.

"'Do you know when the witch doctor is to pick between myself and Phelan?' I asked him when I recovered my breath, as we were near the door of the prison.

"'To-morrow night,' he said. 'They're bringing a missionary up the coast to do the marrying.'

"'And how will the witch-chaser do the picking?' I asked.

"He was a jewel, was that fat Dyak. Squatting there in the darkness, he explained that Phelan and I would be put into a dark hut, and that his highness the medicine-man would crawl in through the door and grab one of us by the arm or the leg or any other part of us that he could find in the darkness. The one he caught hold of would be the bridegroom.

"'Me friend,' says I, and I took hold of him by the hand, 'I want that lady; I want her badly. Do you think that the witch-doctor can be bought?'

"The Dyak put his finger to his nose to let me see that the medicine-guy wasn't the sort of person to lead a reform movement against graft, and me heart grew lighter there and then.

"'Look,' said I, and I wet the head of a match to let him see how the phosphorus glowed in the dark, 'if I smeared a bit of this on me forehead do you think the witch-chaser would come straight for it?'

"'If it was made worth his while!' said he, and the way he grinned made me see that the haythen isn't the blind person the missionaries would make him out to be.

"'Well, here,' said I, and I pulled out me pipe and a little bronze Buddha that a tea-girl gave me at Yokosuka; 'they're yours if he makes for the phosphorus patch. I want that lady,' says I, 'and if you can arrange it with the witch-doctor, I'll steal the Frenchman's eye-glasses and give them to ye.'

"'You're as good as picked,' said the Dyak, speaking in his own lingo, and I went back to my bed with an easy mind. Phelan had an idea that size and intellect run together, but it's been proved a dozen times that they don't."

SHANAHAN stood up and stretched himself. "I'm walking around here a bit," he said. "Will ye come?"

I sprang up and followed him as he turned towards the poverty-stricken area around Miller's Point.

"And did the phosphorous dodge work?" I asked, as he remained silent.

"It did," he answered. "The German

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missionary arrived the night after I had the private view of her Majesty doing the Bob Fitzsimmons act on the threescore servants of the royal household, and Phelan and I were popped into a dark hut to let the witch-doctor draw the winning card. He was a cute old grafter, that guy. Faith! he made straight for the phosphorus gleam the moment he crawled in the door— Hold on a minute, I want to see a man in here."

He whistled at the rear of a dilapidated dwelling in a dirty cross street, and a big, raw-boned man with a scared look on his face thrust his head through the window.

"Come out a minute," said Shanahan coaxingly; "I've got a friend I want to introduce you to."

The big man looked around cautiously, jammed a dirty felt hat on his head and started to crawl through the small window.

"Do a hustle!" urged Shanahan. "Quick, man!"

The big fellow picked himself up and rushed towards an opening in the paling fence that surrounded the small back yard.

"Go it!" yelled Shanahan. "Come on! Hustle!"

He grabbed the arm of the big man and attempted to pull him through the hole, but at that moment a shout split the silence of the street and sent an army of echoes scurrying into space:

"Phelan! Stop, will ye? *Phelan!*"

The big man turned, and his flushed face paled before the vision that dashed from the rear door and charged after him. It was red-headed, fierce and domineering, the figure of a termagant, insane with passion.

"Come back!" she screamed. "Go inside, will you? And you, Jim Shanahan, I'll be putting one of these flower-pots at your head if you don't leave a decent woman's husband alone!"

The giant stumbled back to the house, and Shanahan grasped my coat-sleeve and pulled me to the nearest corner.

"That's her!" he spluttered.

"Who?" I cried.

"The White Queen!"

"What?"

"Sure!"

"But I thought you—you——" I stammered. "Why, I—I thought you used the phosphorus?"

"*On Phelan!*" he whispered. "Smeared it on his forehead without him knowing it. Do you blame me? I saw her mop up fifty Dyak women that night I had the private view. I'm going to wait round here for a while; Mick might make another attempt to get out."

I SAID good-by and walked towards Lower George Street, but I turned after taking only half a dozen paces.

"And was the Admiral right about her name?" I asked.

"He was," said Shanahan. "Her maiden name was Nora Finnegan. She was the stewardess on the B. I. boat, *The White Pilgrim*, that went down in Sandakan Bay. She was the only one of the crew the haythen didn't eat, and faith! it's little wonder they didn't! But if Mick Phelan——"

Shanahan broke off with a cry of rage. A well-aimed flower-pot struck him on the back of the neck, and he dashed madly towards the water-front as the red head of Mrs. Phelan, ex-queen of Sandakan, was thrust around the corner. I beat Shanahan by five yards in the sprint.

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DYNAMITE

STORIES
by
Hudson Maxim

EDITOR'S NOTE—The name of Hudson Maxim, author of the accompanying series of Dynamite Stories, is perhaps the most distinguished in the development of high explosives and kindred inventions. First to make smokeless powder in the United States, he has worked with dynamite, maximite, stabilite and motorite, with torpedoes and rams, with projectiles and armor plate, with automatic guns and detonating fuses, as a veritable familiar of these grim agents of destruction. Long the most famous inventor in his field, he has gathered many an anecdote of explosion. Though some of these stories make saturnine sport of death, they are unique in their crisp dramatic quality, and ADVENTURE is fortunate in giving them to its readers.

THE MULE GUN

ON THE old days when the Indians were sometimes troublesome on the Western frontier, an officer in the regular army, who was rather an ingenious fellow, conceived the idea of making a mountain gun out of a mule and the barrel of a common field-piece, using the mule for the carriage. He therefore had the gun securely mounted on the back of the beast.

They had not proceeded far with this novel battery when a small knot of hostile savages was espied quietly eating their midday meal within easy range. The mounted gun was forthwith loaded heavily with grape and canister and the mule taken by the head and pointed in the direction of the Indians. A short piece of fuse in the touch-hole of the gun was ignited.

The mule, hearing the sizzing of the fuse, began to rear and snort and kick and whirl about, while the officer and his men scudded to cover and flattened themselves out upon the ground. They had not long to wait when there was a terrific crash. The gun had exploded under the overcharge, with the utter demolition of the mule carriage.

The Indians, hearing the report, looked quickly about them, and, seeing the fragments of an exploded mule rocketing through the air, were frightened nearly out of their wits, and fled precipitately.

DIVIDED HE FELL

THE freezing-point of dynamite is about eight degrees Fahrenheit higher than that of water. Once frozen, it remains congealed at temperatures considerably above its freezing-point. When solidly frozen it can be detonated only with much difficulty, and even then with a great loss of explosive force. On this account those using dynamite in cold countries are constantly in need of thawing out the treacherous explosive.

The operation is neither difficult nor dangerous, if done in the right way; but it may be made full of peril by carelessness or ignorance.

A friend of mine, named Roynor, when gold-hunting in Alaska, had as partner a venerable prospector who went always with his boot-legs stuffed full of dynamite-sticks, to keep Jack Frost away from the explosive. The old man had a pleasantly casual way of filling the oven of the stove with the dynamite cartridges to thaw them out. Sometimes, too, he forgot that he had put them there; which inadvertences at last strained Roynor's nerves beyond their elastic limit. Roynor was by no means of a timorous disposition on ordinary occasions, but the ancient prospector's repeated care-

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lessness after a time got the young man's goat, to use a slang expression. He remonstrated, but it was of no use.

"Jim," he said finally, "if you can't be more careful with that dynamite, we'll separate."

That same night, as Roynor approached the shack after the day's work, a concussion stunned him and he was thrown violently to the ground. When at last he recovered consciousness he perceived one of the ancient prospector's hands lying near by. He stared at it a moment meditatively. Then:

"Well, Jim," he remarked sadly, "I guess we've separated all right—particularly you, Jim!"

A LIVELY DEAD ONE

SEVERAL years ago at the works of the American Forcite Company a batch of nitrogelatin blew up in process of manufacture and several men were killed. One laborer who was working so near where the explosion occurred that his clothing was nearly all blown off and he was spattered with the blood of his companions and crazed by the shock, started in a wild and aimless run along the road, with his tattered garments flying in the air.

A woman of the neighborhood, whose husband was employed at the works, intercepted him with the eager inquiry:

"Is any one killed?"

"Yes, yes!" said he. "We are all killed! Every one of us is killed!"

And it was some time before he could be convinced that he was not among the dead.

HOW GUSSIE GOT LOADED

WHEN I was a young man I taught several terms of school in Maine, where, in the small country districts, the teacher is expected to be a walking encyclopedia of information.

One day there came a loud knock upon the door of the schoolhouse. On going out to see what was the cause of the imperative summons, I found standing there the wife of one of the neighbors, white as a sheet with agitation and alarm. She excitedly told me that her little boy, Gussie, had just swallowed a bullet, and she asked me what she should do for him.

"Why," said I pleasantly, "give him a good charge of gunpowder. But be careful not to point him toward anybody."

She went home and gave him a dose of gunpowder, without ever seeing the joke.

LINES TO A LADY

SOME years ago, when I was conducting some experiments with detonators for my safety delayed-action fuse, which has recently been adopted by the United States Navy as the service detonating fuse for high-explosive projectiles, I received instructions that a parcel of fulminate detonators, made at the torpedo-station, had been received and was being held for me to call for it at Fort Lafayette, and I was told to go to the Brooklyn Navy Yard, whence I would be taken in a tug to Fort Lafayette.

After having procured the package, I concluded that it would be much more expeditious for me to take a trolley-car home than to return by the tug. On entering the car and seating myself, I placed the package beside me on the seat, keeping my eye constantly upon it. It was perfectly safe, by the way, to carry, if subject to merely ordinary handling, but it would not do to jump on it or to kick it about much, for, in that case, there would surely be some energetic results.

No sooner had I comfortably seated myself in the car than a huge, determined, militant-looking woman entered, brushing a few small men aside. Seeing all the seats occupied by some one, except the space where the package was, she turned and hurled herself backward and plumped downward.

Her movements were so quick that I had barely time to throw my left arm firmly under her, and, although I am unusually strong, I had all I could do to support her enormous bulk. When she felt my arm beneath her, protecting the package, she was all the more indignant and determined to crush the package in order to teach me a lesson, and she glared upon me furiously. I finally succeeded, by throwing my shoulder against her, in toppling her sufficiently to remove the package with my right hand, and then I let her down upon the seat.

I seldom wax poetical, and never permit myself to write verses to ladies when I am not sure that they will be gratefully received. But, in this case, I side-stepped a little from my usual course and, taking my

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note-book from my pocket, wrote the following lines, which I folded up nicely and, when I arrived at my street, I handed the paper to Her Militancy:

Dear Madam, I'm an anarchist.
That package was a bomb.
I'm on my way
Some one to slay,
And this is really true—
I didn't want to waste that bomb
On just the likes of you.

WHERE THE PLASTERING RAINS

WHEN the grandfather of the present Czar found his engineers disputing as to the best route for a railway between two cities in his dominions, the autocrat took ruler and pencil and drew on the map a straight line from the one town to the other.

"Build it so!" he commanded. And he was obeyed.

That was the freak of despotism. In this present century, skilled engineers set themselves a like task at a saner bidding. Up in the mountains of New Jersey to-day a great railroad is busy with a cut-off that, when completed, will shorten the right of way by a few miles. Incidentally, this is the largest railroad contract ever undertaken. The cut-off is being built to save miles—nothing else. To that end, the topography of the country is disregarded as recklessly as the Czar disregarded it in Russia aforetime. Simply, the road must run where the Company wishes it to run, not where nature offers a path. A mountain in the way must be tunneled, a valley that interposes must be filled.

It is for this sort of work that the god of dynamite girds up his loins and piles miracle on miracle in achievement. About thirteen cars loaded with dynamite are sent to the cut-off from the nearest powder works each month. Allowing four hundred and fifty cases, of fifty pounds each, to a car, we have a total of 292,500 pounds used there in a single month, which amounts to almost ten thousand pounds daily. Just think of it—ten thousand pounds of dynamite exploding in that nook amid the mountains *every day!* And that has been going on for a year already, and the end is not yet.

One would think that such a quantity must indeed set those peaceful hills and vales a-shudder. Well, it does—literally. The towns about know that. Within a radius of miles, old plastering is raining most of the time. As to the new, it is a fact that a house, otherwise completed six months ago, is still unplastered. The job has already been done thoroughly four times, and in each instance the new plastering has fallen at the first trumpet-blast of doom. That house will be plastered after the cut-off has been completed—not a day sooner.

THE ELEVATION OF WOMANHOOD

I HAD a certain man in my employ down at Maxim by the name of Benjamin Billings, whom we called Ben Billingsgate. Ben held views very strongly prejudicial to dogs and matrimony. He was all that is implied by the term "all-round useful." Though an erratic fellow, he was bright and energetic and seemed to be able to do anything under the sun when he set about it. But he lacked initiative, except in the expression of his opinions about those two abominations—dogs and matrimony.

When he was young and ardent he had married Sukyanna, a maiden who was dominated by the delusion that she had been born with a mission, to which all other considerations were secondary and should be subordinated. She was also a woman with a pug dog. Benjamin's nerves had been frazzling out for some time, and his patience was sorely tried by the division of the lady's affections between him and the dog—with a decided leaning toward the dog.

One day he brought home to his wife a beautiful Christmas present, which consisted of a large colored photograph of himself, mounted in an exquisite gold frame. The expense of the thing represented a week's hard labor, but he wanted to create an impression upon his wife. He believed in doing things by wholes and in striking hard to win. His wife was very pleased —with the frame.

On his return from work the following evening, he took a sidelong glance toward the mantel over which the picture had been hung. He did not recognize himself. There in the frame was a life-size photograph of the pug in place of his, which Sukyanna had removed.

He uttered never a word, but his whole mental mechanism was turning somersaults. The next day, at roll-call, that dog was reported among the missing.

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Benjamin pretended to sympathize and to condole with his wife, but she was disconsolate. Some Gipsies had passed that way during the day, and it was suspected that they might have stolen the dog. The horse was accordingly hitched up and a drive of ten miles was taken. When the Gipsies were overhauled and rounded up, the pug was not discovered. Then an advertisement was inserted in all the town papers. Still no pug. The canine continued a persistent absentee.

As a matter of fact, Benjamin had devoted ingenuity enough to the destruction of that dog to form the basis of a Sherlock Holmes detective story. He had prepared a sort of canister-bomb, adapted to go off, not merely by a gentle tap, but by a strong thump of any sort. The dog, the bomb and a strong rawhide string, with which to tether the bomb to the dog, were confidingly placed in the hands of a small boy in the neighborhood, known to have both a sense of humor and a taste for the mischievous. The boy was, however, fond of dogs, and it eventuated that he decided to keep the dog for himself. Hence the delay in the finale of this story.

But the urchin's sense of humor finally got the better of his affection. He found it impossible to choke off the appeal to his imagination of hitching that bomb to the dog's tail. Consequently he took the pug out and carefully tied the canister to its tail. Following the ingenious instructions of Benjamin, as soon as he had done so he dodged into the house and shut the door before the dog realized what had happened.

When the pug discovered itself a part of an infernal machine, old-home-week associations rose up in its memory, and it made a bee-line for home and human mother.

Benjamin had made a little miscalculation about the amount of thumping that would be required to actuate the exploding mechanism of his ingenious bomb, and it did not explode immediately, as expected. The dog and bomb, consequently, hurtled through space like a comet with a head on both ends of the tail.

On the dog's arrival, Sukyanna was going about her household duties, with a book in one hand, written by Miriam Mushroom on "The Transcendentalism of the Universal, and Its Relevancy to the Elevation of Womanhood;" while, with the other hand, directed only by subconscious mental process born of habit, she was preparing supper for Benjamin. She prided herself on that power of concentration and absorption, so common to the artistic temperament, which can resist for a while the battering-ram assaults on consciousness of howling children, barking dogs, or a house on fire.

As a result, she did not hear or see puggy as, with whine and din and clatter, he rushed into the room where she stood. Not receiving the expected attention and consolation, puggy in his impatience circled around the human mother, entwining the shanks of her in the strong rawhide cord, until dog and bomb had effectually hobbled her skirts, when, tripping, she went down on both.

This mean trick on the part of Benjamin bruised her artistic soul and proved far too much; she instantly separated from Benjamin—in the direction of the empyrean.

She had at last achieved the realization of the Elevation of Womanhood.

WHEN HE SHIRKED

A PROMINENT financier, who was a much better business man than he was inventor, read of Moissan's experiments in making artificial diamonds. The financier conceived the idea of converting anthracite coal directly into diamonds by subjecting it to enormous pressure of gunpowder exploded in a strong steel cylinder.

As he wished to market a large quantity of his manufactured diamonds before their artificial character should leak out, he determined to conduct his experiments very secretly; consequently, he put the man-of-all-work at his country place upon the job. This faithful and useful servant was to report the progress of the work regularly at the city office of his employer.

After trying several experiments with black gunpowder, the man reported that the scheme didn't work—that no diamonds were produced.

The financier then told the useful that he had evidently reached the limit of the power of black gunpowder.

"Now try dynamite," said he.

There was, a little later, a break in the chain of reports, and he wrote the useful, asking him why he did not report. Still no answer.

After waiting several weeks, the idea suddenly struck the financier that possibly

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the process had proved successful and that the useful planned to betray him. He accordingly sent a peremptory telegram to him to report at once on pain of discharge.

The next day a vision, swathed and bandaged and perambulating on crutches, entered his office.

"You infernal old scoundrel!" yelled the wreck, as he entered. "Blow a man up with dynamite, and then threaten to *discharge* him for not *reporting!*"

HOIST BY HIS OWN PETARD

LIQUID nitroglycerin is still used to torpedo the oil-wells when they get old, in order to give them a new lease of life.

There was one teamster in the old days who had become notorious as a hauler of the dangerous explosive. The law does not permit the shipment of the liquid by freight or by express, and for that reason this teamster had plenty to do in hauling nitroglycerin for long distances. He was a great smoker and his old pipe was always alight, though he might be riding on a ton of nitroglycerin with a few kegs of black gunpowder chinked into the load.

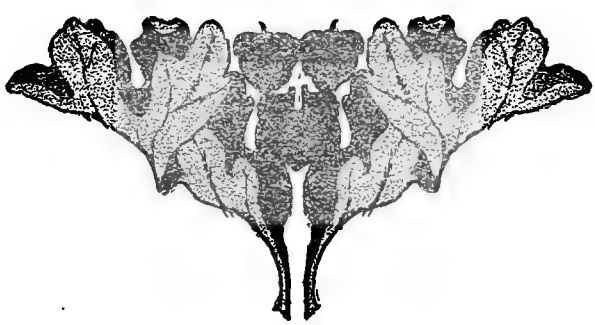
One day he was carrying on runners about two tons of nitroglycerin and a few odd kegs of gunpowder, when something happened. There had been a fall of several inches of light snow the evening before, and the scene of the eventuation was in an open field which he was crossing.

There was an enormous crater in the ground; the light snow around the crater was besprinkled with a few shreds of horse and harness and a sliver or two of sled, but not a trace of the driver was ever found.

THE FLASK OF LIQUOR

SOME years ago, in Austria, a worker in one of the mines found a flask nearly full of a liquor that he took to be whisky. Delighted with this treasure-trove, he raised the flask to his lips and gulped down a portion of the contents. Another workman, standing by, snatched the flask, and, in his turn, quaffed the liquor greedily.

That liquid in the flask was nitroglycerin, which, taken internally, is one of the most virulent of poisons. Both of these workmen were stone dead in less time than it has taken to tell this story of their fatal folly.



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Can a Man be True?

by Winifred Graham

CHAPTER XXXIX

A MONARCH'S EXISTENCE

VERY quietly Maldio explained his proposition to Gisdel.

"With Count Bistoff's help," he said, "I have made it clear to the people that you have been more sinned against than sinning. You were never in league with your mother against me; you never even desired the throne. I therefore intend still to regard you as a brother. I invite you to live on at the Palace in princely state. In time you will win the confidence of the people and make them forget their grudge against you."

Gisdel shuddered and shook his head.

"I know you mean well by me, Maldio, and I am not ungrateful. I feel very touched by your brotherly suggestion, but I shall never spend another easy hour in Lambasa. That awful night when the Queen was murdered in my presence has conpletely shattered my nerves. They would have torn me limb from limb had I not cowered away like a criminal in hiding, at the mercy of the woman who was herself a murderess—though it is humiliating to think I owe my life to her. I should go in terror of some future outrage. Let me go unrecognized—help me to abdicate without the knowledge of my enemies! I could not bear their pitying or vindictive glances. I shall make a new home for myself, a new circle of friends, start a fresh life, and try to do better. You are right, Maldio; I must endeavor to be a man. Perhaps we shall meet sometimes, when you travel to distant lands, and then you will be able to judge

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whether I have carried out this resolution of improvement."

Gisdel spoke in all sincerity. The buffetings of fate had taught him a lesson, and the lonely hours of his recent imprisonment brought forth the fruit of serious reflection.

"As you will," replied the King. "If your happiness lies outside Lambasa, I would be the last to urge you to remain. You will always have an ample income to live as a prince in any part of the globe you like to select, and for the present I do not think you could do better than travel the world over. Nothing so enlarges the mind and helps one to forget sorrow."

"Can I go to-morrow at daybreak?" gasped Gisdel eagerly. "I feel as if flight alone could save my reason and give me back my sleep!"

He was like a child chafing to get out of school.

A faint smile parted Maldio's lips as he replied: "If you wish, you can go this very minute. There is nothing to prevent you, for now you are absolutely a free man. I suppose, Gisdel, you have never known the joy of freedom?"

"Never!" gasped the breathless voice, while the thin, blue-veined hands made a pitiful and expressive gesture.

"Then you have not yet discovered the real meaning of life," answered his brother. "I, too, felt fettered once. I longed to cast off my chains, to be only myself. The opportunity came, I seized it, and do not regret my decision. I have had a great experience. May your lucky star ascend and lead you to some sure, safe goal—as mine has done."

He thought of Loti as he spoke, and his face softened.

Gisdel wiped his brow, fanning himself with his handkerchief, lace-edged like a woman's and faintly scented.

"Tell me," he murmured—and his lips grew dry—"what has happened to Caroline de L'Isle?" He shivered as he spoke her name.

"She escaped before your mother's body was removed from her garden. The people helped her to go, for they look upon her in the light of a heroine. They say she struck the first blow at the old order of things, and if she were brought back to be punished, it would cause another rising. My Councilors advise me to let the matter rest. They say, and perhaps wisely, Why seek to avenge the death of the woman who sought to take my life, who paid her own physician to compass my end, that my throne might be left vacant for another?"

Gisdel's white face grew scarlet.

"They have reason," he said. "It was a vile, a fiendish plot against an innocent man! Though she was my mother, though I now feel nothing but horror for Mademoiselle de L'Isle, I commend the decision; I see the people are right."

The two brothers shook hands.

"Then we are friends, agreed on all points," declared Maldio, with a sigh of relief. He had feared that Gisdel might resent Caroline's escape.

"Yes, indeed. It really looks as if at last I could see light. During your absence—in those free days you spoke of, did you see the beautiful Miss Magnus? I remember that the night my mother burned her portrait you were nearly mad with rage."

Maldio felt for the first time that Gisdel, with all his faults, could at least be sympathetic. Perhaps, since he had suffered, some chord had been touched in his nature which never made music when the hardening influence of Horatia cramped the poor crushed brain and feeble intellect.

With a thrill of pride the King related the story of his English romance, and his idea of settling Loti in Lambasa, near the Palace.

Gisdel grew excited as he drank in the words.

"You will never forsake her?" he queried. "Never bring a queen to share your throne?"

Maldio bowed his head in assent.

"Then," gasped the Prince, "my son, if I married, would inherit—he would be a future King of Lambasa!"

For a moment the thought thrilled him. Though an exile, he would marry a royal princess and give the country which had so ill-treated him a better and nobler representative.

The words forced Maldio to realize the serious position in which he had placed himself. The country would never accept Gisdel's son, for would he not be the grandchild of the hated Horatia, contaminated by his inheritance, with her blood in his veins? Gisdel was quick to see the shadow on his step-brother's brow.

"Ah," he murmured, "you talk very grandly of your love for Miss Magnus, but when it comes to the point, she will have to

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go to the wall! It is always the way. The country first, and a heart's love second! Kings can not bask in the sweets of romance. Your subjects, your ministers, Bistoff himself will force you in the end to see the matter with other eyes. I shall wait for the news, knowing it must come as certainly as we stand here. You will put your own feelings aside and sacrifice your word—to appease the mob, to play up to the public, to keep your throne! It is only human; I should be foolish to expect it could be otherwise."

Maldio drew back as if some invisible hand had struck him a stunning blow. Gisdel spoke with strong conviction, as if he might have been prompted by an instinct apart, a supernatural knowledge whispered from lips unseen.

For the first time Maldio asked himself whether it were possible he would prove untrue. Surely his present resolve could never meet with such opposition as to make him a liar and force him to strike this fatal blow at his and Loti's happiness! He felt the very question was unworthy of his manhood.

He crushed the awful specter of doubt, ashamed that it should assail his thoughts for one moment.

"Gisdel," he said, "I swear that Loti will be always first!"

"Ah, yes, the first love, but not the last wife! I do not say the future queen will reign in your heart—that is very improbable. She will be just a necessary evil, like many of the Court officials who hang about the place and do nothing. The country will choose her, and unsophisticated peasants in the provinces discuss the young King's love-match, believing firmly that a great romance is casting a halo over your crowned head. It is such an old story, and you are no different from others who have fought against this custom, always to give in at the last. If ever I love again, I shall be free to obey my inclinations, while you must see a barrier built between the old brief holiday life in England and the stern formality of a Monarch's existence——"

Gisdel's tongue was racing on, elated by a sudden flow of eloquence, when suddenly Maldio, unable to bear these bitter prophecies, broke in with a peremptory "Hush!"

Gisdel stopped in the middle of his sentence. "I beg your pardon," he said, "for speaking my thoughts aloud. My conviction was so strong I forgot that my words must cause pain and resentment. Believe me, Maldio, I did not wish to wound you intentionally."

The King forced a smile.

"Oh, I know that well enough," he murmured. "But remember, Gisdel, if ever you do hear that in Loti's lifetime I am about to make another woman my queen, there will be some dark mystery at the back of it all. It would not be the brother who is speaking with you now, but a shadow of his past self, controlled by a fiendish power such as hypnotism, or any other equally obnoxious form of modern witchcraft. If only I could rely upon some strong man, who would promise, under such conditions, to seek me out and see whether I were indeed in my right mind!"

He looked appealingly at Gisdel.

"Some strong man," murmured his stepbrother weakly, "—yes, that is what you would need. But I am not strong, Maldio —you must never rely upon me."

CHAPTER XL

"MISS MAGNUS"

LOTI felt keenly those long days of separation which lengthened into weeks. Maldio was so busy he could write only short, affectionate letters telling her of his work in Lambasa and that he was making all preparations for her to join him at the first possible moment.

At last the good news came that she was to start at once. Maldio, with his usual thoughtfulness, had arranged for a courier and traveling maid to join her in London.

"You have only to put yourself into his hands, and everything will be made easy for you," wrote the affectionate husband. "Bistoff knows the man and has employed him before. He has splendid testimonials, and the best of characters. I wish you to travel simply as 'Miss Magnus,' and I shall count the hours till our reunion!"

The words filled Loti with a sense of dismay, and a sudden dread fear of what would await her at the end of that journey. He gave no hint of the reception she would receive, or whether she was to come as a guest of the Court, or be hidden away as a nobody, friendless and shunned by all in the royal set. Bravely she concealed her

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inward misgivings from the Professor as she read him portions of Maldio's letter.

"Surely," said the old man, "it is inexplicable why you should use your old name and pass as a spinster, when your wedding-ring proclaims you are a wife!"

Loti looked at the band of gold and her heart sank.

"I shall wear the ring on my right hand," she replied. "Of course Maldio has some good reason for his request. I have promised to trust him implicitly, and I am not going to begin to doubt in these early days."

The old man looked deeply troubled. Ever since sending the large registered envelope to Lambasa, Loti's father appeared restless and ill at ease. He watched the post eagerly, and sometimes Loti noticed a certain feverish anxiety in his manner when the letter-box gave up no reply.

"If only I could persuade you to disappoint Maldio and remain at home until you are sure you will not be placed in an unpleasant position!" he sighed. "Men do not value what they can get too easily, and you have made everything so easy for your royal lover. Don't you see, Loti, that, with your beauty and charm, you might in the end command him, instead of waiting to be commanded? I think you should take up a strong position and refuse to join him until you are more certain of your future. I do not like the idea of your calling yourself 'Miss Magnus;' it seems like acknowledging you are not a wife. It is a reasonless and cruel request on Maldio's part—in fact, it almost amounts to insult!"

"Father, I must follow my destiny now, however hard it proves, and if I find that life in Lambasa is degrading; if I am to be but a tool of intrigue, unacknowledged, hidden away secretly, I will return and live my lonely life in England, disillusioned and heart-broken. At present I prefer not to judge, and to think the best of one who has ever shown me the deepest devotion. Don't try to shatter my faith yet, but believe with me that all will be well."

"What do you hope?" asked the Professor. "What do you wish?"

Loti considered a moment. The shadow on her brow gave the fair face a look of premature age, like some exquisite flower withering for need of sun to expand its delicate leaves and draw forth fragrant perfume.

"I hope that Maldio will tell his subjects of his marriage and resolution to remain faithful to the wife of his youth, whom he has chosen from all the world. I would like him to insist that I should be received by all his friends and treated with the respect due to one whose life is joined to the life of their King. I wish that in everything I may prove a help to him, and an unfailing inspiration, to encourage the good and check any instinct which might prove unworthy. I do not see myself gaining this power over him by staying away, as if I feared my position. 'Miss Magnus' can hold her own just as well as Mrs. Kingsley. It is an ill omen to conjure up imaginary dread of painful happenings, which God grant may never come to pass!"

The Professor listened with downcast eyes; he did not want her to read the doubt and sorrow in his heart. "You desire much, my child," he murmured, "and I, at least, will pray that you may not be disappointed."

Loti kissed him tenderly. She would not for the world have had him know that this time of waiting at College View weighed upon her spirits. She felt she had grown out of the present surroundings. The pastimes and duties of girlhood appeared in an entirely different light since the fuller existence of her honeymoon with Maldio. She disliked meeting her old friends. They asked her so many questions, especially the young, curious companions of her youth. Who was Mr. Kingsley? Where had she met him? How soon would they settle down? Had they yet decided on a house? Older people were almost more trying in the studied reticence of their remarks and the guarded words of congratulation which came somewhat haltingly from doubtful lips. Loti could read only too plainly the unspoken suspicion. All these annoyances she studiously kept from the Professor.

A NUMBER of days were spent in London, where Loti procured suitable dresses for her journey to Lambasa. Martha had accompanied her on more than one shopping expedition, and returned awed and bewildered by the prices paid for Loti's beautifully cut garments.

"No wonder our young lady looks such a duchess," she told the newly imported maid at College View. "We went to a regular palace to buy her clothes, and the

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young women who served were just as fine and grandly decked out as the ladies who came to order the wares. I never was so surprised in all my life. There was Mrs. Kingsley just as cool and collected as if she had always been able to spend money and give big sums for mere trifles. 'It must seem extravagant to you, Martha,' she said, 'but Mr. Kingsley is so very particular, and he told me especially to deal with this house.'"

When the day for departure dawned, Martha was tearful, and though Loti strongly protested, the Professor insisted on accompanying her to London.

He was strangely preoccupied on the journey to town. Once or twice Loti addressed him and he paid no heed whatever to her remark, obviously not hearing. His broad forehead was contracted in a frown.

The courier, an elderly man with the air of a soldier, was introduced by an official from the agency where he was engaged. A letter was produced from Count Bistoff, giving all necessary instructions for the journey and not once mentioning the King's name.

The maid was a capable person, also middle-aged, who had traveled the world over with people of title and whose wages would have made Martha's hair stand on end.

She had once accompanied the Countess Bistoff to Lambasa, and knew the route well. She took a long critical glance at "Miss Magnus," and evidently approved of her attire. Instinctively Loti felt glad she had obeyed Maldio's instructions in buying the best of everything to complete her trousseau.

THE Professor paced slowly up and down the station platform meditating, while Loti interviewed her two new attendants.

"Ought I to tell her? O God! ought I to tell her?" he asked, biting his lips and pressing his hands together.

His own sense answered the question: "You have left it till too late now."

He turned back to say good-by. Already Loti was in the train, with the maid seated opposite, and his opportunity had vanished.

"Too late now," echoed his heart. "You have left it till too late!"

CHAPTER XLI

A ROYAL RIVAL

LOTI had many questions to ask Purcell, her new maid, when she found her enthusiastic on the subject of Lambasa.

"Indeed, miss, it is a beautiful country," Purcell declared with enthusiasm. "I would like to live there always."

The "Miss" jarred on Loti, but she knew she must accustom herself to the term so familiar but a short time ago.

"I suppose," she said, "the climate is extremely good, and, from the pictures, the scenery must be most picturesque."

"Ah, yes," sighed the woman, evidently dwelling on some tender memory of more youthful days. "The sun always shines there, and the flowers are exquisite. I think the surroundings make the people romantic. The men are exceptionally handsome, and with such good manners! It is a lesson to the English who visit their shores."

"I believe," said Loti, smiling, "you lost your heart to some one in Lambasa."

A sudden thrill of sympathy made her feel as if she had known Purcell for years.

The sedate-looking maid blushed beneath her neat black veil.

"It was long ago, miss," she answered, "but the thought of revisiting the old scenes makes me remember. The Villa Monastero, where I stayed with the Countess Bistoff, seemed to me the most glorious spot I had ever known. She was a very kind mistress, too. I was taken once to a servants' party at the Palace, and we were shown the State Rooms. Having been there, you may imagine how very interested I have felt in the wonderful story of King Maldio's return. I am sure the country can never show sufficient gratitude to Count Bistoff for his loyalty and amazing cleverness."

Loti wondered whether Purcell in any way connected her with the King, and the thought passed through her mind that perhaps it was unwise to encourage conversation. Much as she longed to hear any gossip of the Court which had reached Purcell's ears during her term of service with Countess Bistoff, discretion kept her from further questioning. She replied that the Count must certainly be a very great man,

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and briefly remarked on the recent horrors in the Capital.

Purcell burst forth again with a stream of information. She had seen the Queen once—such an evil face!—and even in those days Purcell's special friend, a sergeant in the King's Regiment, told her they always feared Horatia might be assassinated. She had never won the love of a single human being; even the children were brought up to hate her name.

"It will be very different now," replied Loti, warming to the subject, "for King Maldio was always immensely popular. He is 'Maldio the Thinker,' and all his thoughts are for good."

Purcell's sharp eyes observed the tender expression softening the girl's beautiful face as she mentioned Maldio's name. The maid knew nothing of Miss Magnus beyond the fact that she was a young friend of Countess Bistoff's, who required an experienced attendant to travel with her to Lambasa.

"Of course," she thought, "if Miss Magnus is going out to be under the wing of the Count and Countess, she will enter the Court set naturally. She may even be a guest at Court, and I shall sleep in the Palace."

The mere idea of staying beneath a royal roof elated her beyond measure.

Loti felt inwardly grateful to Maldio for seeing she was provided with such a capable escort. Tooth, the courier, made the journey one of ease and luxury for mistress and maid. The large deck-cabin and reserved carriages, marked by the name "Magnus," made Purcell aware she was traveling with an extremely wealthy young lady. Loti, noting that the woman appeared impressed, felt that Maldio had given good advice in begging her to leave all arrangements in Count Bistoff's hands.

Loti having left her English papers on the boat, paid no heed to foreign literature, but buried herself in a novel commenced at College View, hoping it might pass some of the long hours before she would again be clasped in Maldio's arms.

At one of the stations, Purcell, anxious to advertise her reading powers and knowledge of langauges, asked if she might alight to buy a journal.

"The train waits here for five minutes, miss, and Tooth, I see, is walking up and down. It is pleasant to take the air, if only for so brief a time," she said in her low, respectful voice.

Loti gave the required permission, and continued reading. Had she watched Purcell, she would have seen the woman standing transfixed before a large placard by the book-stall, gazing at it with widely extended eyes, while she talked excitedly to Tooth. Then, as the guard gave warning of departure, she hurried back with her journal, breathless and smiling.

As they steamed out of the station, she devoured the contents of the flimsy paper before communicating her great piece of news to the preoccupied figure in the opposite seat.

"Oh, miss!" she said, "I feel I must tell you, for indeed it is fortunate we are going to Lambasa. You could not have selected a better moment for your visit—it will be all so gay, so splendid! The papers have just announced that young King Maldio is engaged to be married, and the wedding will take place quite soon. He is marrying, of course, a lady of royal blood, the beautiful young Duchesse Renée, a direct descendant from Louis XIV. The bride elect is shortly expected to arrive, and it says here that the country awaits her coming with intense eagerness. From this report her noble qualities exceed even her loveliness of person. You will be in good time for all the festivities, and what a wonderful sight it will be—a wedding in that exquisite Cathedral, where the bridegroom was so recently buried in the presence of his mourning and heartbroken admirers!"

Purcell was so taken up with the idea of arriving in time to witness the public rejoicing that she did not notice that Loti let the paper, which she had taken mechanically, fall to the ground, while she sat like an image carved in stone, white, rigid, apparently lifeless. She could no longer see Purcell, for a dark cloud gathered before her eyes like sudden blindness. Yet she heard the words with painful distinctness. They seemed to pierce her brain, to stop the beating of her heart and still the human throb of pulses which a moment since thrilled with the thought of reunion.

She wanted to shriek aloud, as she bit her lips and clenched her fists in silent though almost uncontrollable agony. She tried to tell Purcell it was a lie, a wicked, cruel fabrication of the press, a false and hideous perversion of the truth. She could not,

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would not believe that Maldio was faithless even in these early days of their love-dream. But no words came, only a feeling of isolation, of sudden heat and bitter cold. The bride's name stared up at her in large letters as the light crept back, enabling her dim eyes to read.

"Duchesse Renée, Duchesse Renée!" The words sank into her tortured mind as, livid with horror, she tried to collect her scattered senses and battle against the sick, faint sensation warring with her strength of will. Purcell saw at once that something serious was the matter and quickly drew from the handsome dressing-bag (one of Maldio's many presents) a gold-tipped bottle of strong smelling-salts.

"The carriage is very hot," she murmured. "I think, miss, you had better lie down and let me bathe your forehead in eau de Cologne."

Loti made no answer. She sniffed at the salts obediently, and bent again over the paper which held her death-blow.

"Duchesse Renée, Duchesse Renée"—the very wheels of the carriage echoed tauntingly the name of her royal rival.

CHAPTER XLII

A CITY OF DEATH

FOR a time Loti appeared paralyzed. Her whole face altered; the light vanished from her eyes, leaving them lusterless and full of mute suffering, pitiful to see. A strange gray tinge gave her lips the appearance of death and alarmed Purcell, who watched, in silent fear, the amazing prostration of a figure recently so full of life and animation.

Very feebly Loti gasped out an inadequate explanation.

"It was the heat," she said, "and the movement of the train." She wished to keep quite still and quiet; she would ask if she required anything. Presently she hoped to be able to read the paper; in the meantime Purcell would oblige her by not talking.

Then with closed eyes Loti silently reviewed the situation. She told herself again and again the whole report must be false—the papers had invented this fresh excitement for purposes of their own, yet at heart she felt frozen, terrified, appalled. Her father's ominous words rang in her mind—the prophecies which had sounded so cruel and meaningless by the light of Maldio's promises. Now she realized that since his return the King's letters had been noticeably brief. At the time she had excused this, putting it down to his work and the many important engagements connected with the State. Then the wounding request that she should travel as Miss Magnus and conceal her married dignity under the guise of spinsterhood—that in itself rose up to convict him.

Possibly, even before he set foot in his kingdom, this royal alliance had been arranged for him and some strong pressure brought to bear which had broken down all loyalty to his English love. That was why he had sent for her so suddenly—he wanted to explain his position, to make her see the situation with his eyes, to force upon her his own changed opinions. She grew hot with burning shame at the thought that he might mean her to remain.

The whole hideous scheme, and this journey to Lambasa, appeared like a nightmare. She longed to turn back, to tell her courier and maid she would go no farther, and refuse to face the rejoicing city, like a broken-hearted widow.

She knew now that her whole life lay in Maldio's keeping. There was nothing beyond her desire for Maldio, and this paralyzing knowledge seemed to kill all the youth in that trembling, girlish frame. But she had not the courage to return without one last look at the face she loved, without hearing from his own lips that he was false. It was wrong, unworthy, cruel, to believe the report! Had he not told her to trust him? Had he not sworn to be true?

Yet to these eager questions, with which she tried to comfort her broken spirit and despairing brain, dark, ominous answers arose.

Each incident of the past rose vividly to torment her and increase the pain of the recent discovery. All those happenings appeared to belong to another life, and she felt like a wandering spirit, earth-bound and alone, surveying the wreck of her full, passionate, happy love-dream.

In vain she tried to scatter the awful thoughts which surrounded her with a dark, heavy, sin-laden atmosphere. The sunlight dancing on avenues of flowering trees, the majestic mountains and quaint pic-

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turesque villages only accentuated her loneliness, for this bright, exquisite world was as an empty shell to the deserted soul of the cast-off bride.

All against her will she began picturing what the Duchesse Renée would be like. They said she was beautiful, but any royal fiancée, with passable good looks, would be thus described. Probably, since she was of the old French nobility, she would have the Parisian's instinct of dress, and appear, by making the most of herself, far better looking than a veritable beauty who had not the glamour of birth and position.

Even in this hour of bitter reflection, Loti prayed she might be spared from the crowning evil of a slumbering hatred turning her mind to gall and poisoning every good instinct. This woman, who would taste the rapture, which she, Loti, had now lost, of course knew nothing of the King's English marriage. His race were famed for their success in diplomatic posts, they were born courtiers, and Maldio had been trained in a hard school.

Loti asked herself whether she could bear even to look at the Duchesse Renée's portraits, which would certainly flood Lambasa. How could she endure to see the eyes into which Maldio must gaze at the wedding ceremony? Could he have lost all affection for his morganatic bride, that he dealt her this foul blow without one word of preparation? Possibly some letter had gone astray. How terrible if he thought she had started with the knowledge of her coming shame!

"We are not far from our destination," said Purcell, some hours later, during which Loti had lain back with closed eyes, feigning sleep and struggling to master her rising tears.

The rigid figure started at the sound of a human voice.

"I trust you are better, miss? I expect a sleep has done you good," added Purcell, respectfully.

"Yes, I am much better," replied Loti, her heart sinking at the words so far from the actual truth. "How do I look?"

"Rather pale, miss. I fear your head must still be aching, but many people are affected by the train. I have often traveled with ladies who suffered from the first moment of departure."

Loti glanced at herself in a hand-glass.

"Rather pale!" she murmured, with a forced smile. "Why, I am a positive ghost! Keep near me, Purcell, when we get out on the platform, for I still feel rather faint, and my legs are trembling so I hardly know how I shall stand. I will take your arm and go straight to the carriage, which Tooth tells me the Count is sending to convey us to my apartments. I hope that neither he nor Countess Bistoff will come to the station. I should find it very difficult to talk to any one just now."

The train slowed down and Loti's blood ran cold. She had reached the Capital of Lambasa—a city of rejoicing for others, a city of death to her.

CHAPTER XLIII

GISDEL'S VISITOR

SINCE Prince Gisdel's speedy and somewhat ignominious departure from Lambasa, he had traveled in France, delighted by the Summer life of its watering-places and the happy natures of the light-hearted inhabitants. Though secretly enjoying the distraction of gay scenes, he studiously mourned his mother by a display of very black garments and frequent allusions to his sad loss.

With elaborate care he avoided mixing with people who were not of royal blood or in high positions. Knowing well the scandal of the past, he at once set to work to display the virtue of his present life. The ex-king kept up rigorously his princely state, was a stickler for etiquette, and advertised daily his desire to prove himself a model of decorum. He gave largely to charities whenever he visited a fresh neighborhood, and was already reaping the reward of this marked reform.

Busy tongues discussed his kindness, and the press applauded his generosity. An opinion arose that in the past he had been maligned, his new friends declaring such a well-behaved prince could never have deserved the harsh rumors circulated by scurrilous lips.

His present popularity was as balm to Gisdel's wounded spirit. Now, instead of black looks or averted faces, he saw on all sides sympathetic crowds craning for a sight of his mournfully garbed figure. The very fact that he had engaged a suite of rooms at a hotel proved a fortune to the manager. At least he was an object of pro-

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found interest—the man who had sat upon a throne only to lose it on the eve of his mother's tragic death.

His sudden freedom had a marked effect upon the previously dull mind Now Gisdel experienced the pleasures of expansion; for the first time he was his own master. His fretful frown and peevish expression were also things of the past. He looked healthier, slightly stouter, certainly more personable. The sickly hue of his skin changed to a pleasant sunburn from basking by the sea and spending his days in the fresh air.

He was glad to find that he had no desire for Bohemian society. The memory of an awful night had shattered forever the old longing to see life in its lowest aspect. He had burned his wings and consequently avoided the candle of dissipation. More than once his heart sickened upon seeing a massive operatic hero, whose type recalled the bull-like singer of Mademoiselle de L'Isle's birthday supper, the brute who had desecrated the Queen's body and cried out for Gisdel's death. Yet he, too, lived on like Caroline, unpunished, as a testimony to her life of crime.

After a pleasant but brief tour, Gisdel decided he must select a settled abode, before journeying farther in search of experience and knowledge. He had so many possessions waiting to be despatched from Lambasa. Finally, after much consideration, he decided to take a princely abode in the most fashionable quarter of Paris, where his many art treasures, inherited from Horatia, would delight his friends.

IN ORDER to superintend the decorations by a great French firm Gisdel rented a temporary abode close by, an apartment of sumptuous luxury. His arrival caused quite a flutter in the breast of many marriageable young ladies of high birth. It was stated that as soon as his term of mourning ended he would entertain the élite at his new mansion and become a most useful member of society.

With joy Gisdel read of his own charms in many an ecstatic paragraph in the current papers. The life of suppression seemed far away in the realms of long ago. He had shaken off his kingly bondage; he was finding himself.

Seated at a dainty satinwood writing-table, Gisdel commenced a letter to his step-brother, whom he almost found it in his heart to pity, as he remembered the daily cares of ruling, the hourly demands on a monarch's leisure. He described his happiness in affectionate terms, hoping that at some not far distant date Maldio would pay him a visit and see his new home. So elated was he by his own virtue that he could not resist a word of censure to the brother who had won the love of a nation which welcomed his own downfall, applauding Prince Gisdel's abdication.

I feel convinced the day will come when you must bitterly regret your youthful folly in forming that English morganatic tie. You will come to look upon Miss Magnus much as I now look on Caroline de L'Isle, only I fear you will not have the good fortune to shake her off so easily. The dancer who murdered my mother is, I am told, on her way to Paris. I have had her movements watched by detectives, and I am convinced, though she is in the same city, she will never dare approach me. She goes in constant dread of arrest, and I hear her popularity is on the wane. Though certain audiences are drawn by her name from sheer curiosity, the majority shun her. Perhaps she is haunted by the face of my dead mother, for I am told she is losing her looks and taking to drugs.

As he wrote the words, a man-servant entered noiselessly and informed him that a lady wished to see him.

He looked up quickly, biting the end of his pen.

"Did you say I was at home?" he queried.

"I told madame that I would inquire if your Highness were disengaged."

"Surely she gave her name?"

The man replied that the lady refused her card and had remarked she was a very great and intimate friend, who wished to give his Highness a surprise.

A sudden light broke over Gisdel's puzzled brow. He remembered that his mother's cousin, the Princess Sieveking, was due to arrive in Paris. He had only seen the announcement in the papers, and had felt a little hurt she had not written. Now her object was clear—she had evidently planned what she hoped would prove a surprise visit.

"The lady is dark and aristocratic looking?" he said questioningly.

The servant answered quickly, in a tone of respectful enthusiasm, that the lady was evidently some one of importance, for she had asked for the Prince as though it were her right to see him. She evidently did not expect to be kept waiting.

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Gisdel smiled and pushed aside his letter to Maldio.

"Ask her whether she is the Princess Sieveking, and, should it prove to be my illustrious relative, show her in at once, but no one else, mind. I do not receive ladies alone, unless they are privileged by ties of blood."

Gisdel's manner was absurdly pompous, as he spoke in a lofty tone of authority which greatly impressed the French servant.

"Yes, your Highness," he replied, and backed from the room with respectfully bowed head.

Gisdel moved quickly to a mirror, passing his hand over his hair to smooth down any stray lock which might mar his immaculate appearance. He readjusted the handsome pin in his tie and squared his shoulders with a sense of pride that he was developing broader proportions. He feared his past reputation might have placed him in his cousin's bad books, and he inwardly registered a vow that he would try to gain her affection and esteem, asking her to introduce him to some desirable *parti*, as of late the idea of a brilliant marriage formed his chief ambition for the future. As the door opened and the servant announced "Her Highness, the Princess Sieveking," Gisdel advanced with a smile and outstretched hand.

But as the French servant, dressed in the resplendent livery of Lambasa's royal house, retired, he observed his master start back with a look of sudden anger, as the tall lady slowly and gracefully raised her thickly patterned veil.

For a moment Gisdel thought his senses deceived him, while he gazed in horror at the familiar features of the woman he had once loved—the bold, smiling, magnificently garbed dancer, Caroline de L'Isle! Her curved lips parted without a word, the great lustrous eyes looked into his with their old subtle fascination. The graceful serpentine movements had given the impression that this favorite of the footlights must be some great aristocrat, as she answered the servant's "Are you the Princess Sieveking?" with a haughty "Yes."

Gisel's lips trembled. In a voice which shook with righteous indignation he cried: "How dare you use my cousin's name? I have nothing to say to my mother's murderess!"

CHAPTER XLIV

THE FAILURE

CAROLINE paid no heed to his wrathful protest, but as he moved to ring for the servant to show her out, she made one of her quick springs forward and placed herself in front of the electric bell.

"One moment!" she said in her low, thrilling voice, arresting him by the flash of her magnificent eyes. "I have not come here for nothing. You shall listen to me! You must set aside for once your hypocritical pose and remember what you were and what I am—not only, as you brutally say, your mother's murderess, but the woman who saved your life from a bloodthirsty mob! When those who hated you cried for vengeance, when they all but turned on me, suspecting I had tricked them, your existence hung upon the veriest thread. My word, just the movement of my lips, the raising of my hand, would have sealed your doom. Every breath you now draw you owe to me, and I have come to claim the life I saved! You loved me once and you shall love me again, with the wild passion of the past!

"You pretend to turn from me in horror because of a deed which even your own country does not call a crime. The woman who fell by my hand was your worst enemy. No one had more cause to hate Queen Horatia than yourself. From infancy she dwarfed the true Gisdel, the real spirit. The child, the boy, the man, were each in turn molded by her false hands, twisted out of shape, contorted to her will. You told me this in the old days with your own lips. You constantly abused her name, you fired me against her, and when she came to insult me, you stood by petrified, unable to silence her hideous abuse. Do you think the memory of that night is less painful to me than to yourself? It is a bond between us forever! Carry your mind back to the hour when you shrank behind my wraps in a dark cupboard, relying solely upon my honor and affection, protected by my diplomacy! You escaped through the sharp wit of the woman you now feign to spurn, the woman who has loved you as perhaps you never deserved to be loved!"

Caroline drew nearer, and Gisdel shuddered as he felt again for a moment that strange magnetic power which was all her

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own. He closed his eyes to shut out the sight of her beauty, shaking off the hand she laid upon his arm and setting his teeth firmly.

"You came here," he muttered, "like the fraud you are, under a name it was gross impertinence to use. You deceived my servant and forced yourself upon me undesired, uninvited. I gather you are so puffed up with pride that you think I would make you indeed a princess, that I would raise you to that proud position, when you are tainted by my mother's blood! Don't you know that, if justice were done, you deserve to perish as a criminal for the hideous outrage upon a queen? If your victim had not plotted the death of King Maldio, nothing could have saved you from capital punishment. You are very proud of guarding my life, but, considering the entertainment was my own, considering I had laden you with jewels and befriended you in every way, was it so marvelously generous to allow me for a brief period to shelter in a dark cupboard, hiding from guests who were drunk with my own wine?"

As Caroline listened, she realized the change in Gisdel. She had come prepared to play upon the weakness of a character verging on mental deficiency. She had fully believed that in less than five minutes her recent dupe would again be caught fast in the net of an old fascination. She knew she had lost her radiant complexion, but now she relied upon artificial means to rejuvenate a face that must soon show signs of intemperate habits and reveal a new but fatal passion for drugs.

Not often bewildered, Caroline felt suddenly at sea. She had lost her power. The sweets of intrigue had changed to gall for the man who stood looking at her with scorn, disgust and loathing.

At least she resolved to make one last appeal to his emotions. She would feign a sudden flood of tears. Drawing an elaborate handkerchief from a white silk bag, she gave vent to low, pitiful sobs, the grief of the born actress, calculated to plunge a whole theater into depths of sympathetic wo. Yet her audience of one listened unmoved as she gasped out: "I love you, I love you! Oh, Gisdel, you are breaking my heart!"

The Prince paid no heed to her words; instead he watched a flimsy sheet of paper which had fluttered out of the bag with her handkerchief. Gradually it glided down her skirt and rested on the brightly polished floor. He could see it was a closely written letter in a man's handwriting. Drawing nearer, he kicked the missive silently under the sofa upon which Caroline had sunk with all the tragic abandon of her theatrical pose.

"I must ask you," he said, tapping her on the shoulder, "not to make a scene here. Unless you consent to go quietly at once, I shall be obliged to summon the police. I do not believe in your protestations of love or grief. All that is quite played out and over. Once I was swayed by your lightest word; now if you knelt at my feet and poured forth unending protestations of affection, it would not move me in the least. The sight of you, the sound of your voice, all fill me with horror. Are you prepared to accept these words of dismissal, or must I take stronger measures?"

He rang the bell as he spoke, and Caroline knew that for once she had failed. The sobs ceased suddenly and as she removed the handkerchief from her eyes there were no real tears upon the thick dark lashes. She started up, glaring fiercely at Gisdel. "You little cur!" she hissed under her breath. "To threaten—to turn out the woman who possesses sheaves of your love-letters! You hateful worm of rotten royalty, I've done with you!"

The folding doors opened, as she muttered the last words of angry unguarded vulgar abuse. She glanced at the tall man-servant, and then at the pale, disgusted Prince.

"Good-by, Cousin Gisdel," she said lightly, with a wave of her heavily ringed fingers. "I have greatly enjoyed my visit. You are always so charmingly hospitable, and gave me even a warmer welcome than I anticipated!"

Gisdel bowed stiffly, making no reply.

As the door closed on Caroline's retreating figure he moved to the sofa and snatched up the letter which had dropped from her bag. It was stamped with the name of the theater at which it was rumored Mademoiselle de L'Isle might possibly appear. Gisdel settled himself in a low cushioned chair, and devoured its contents:

DEAR CAROLINE: I am writing this letter, not in my professional capacity as manager, but as an old friend, who has known you since a child and may venture to speak candidly or even to offer advice. The reason we can not give you your old salary is a

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sad one. Certain of the best families in Paris are horrified to think you have escaped from Lambasa after your much-criticized deed. Though your name may bring us a crowd of curious visitors who are merely staying here a short time, we run a serious risk of offending our old clientele. The leaders of society will do their utmost to make your name unpopular, and with their power of setting a fashion, you must not be surprised if you find yourself tabooed and possibly hissed off the stage.

We are prepared to make the experiment, if you are prepared to accept a lower sum. But now for my word of advice.

At the present moment, Prince Gisdel is all the rage. He was evidently so cracked about you only a short time ago that a woman of your wit and beauty should be able to win him back in spite of all that has occurred. You saved his life—why not play up that business for all it's worth?

If by hook or by crook you can inveigle him into a marriage of some sort—(would it be morganatic? I suppose so!)—then you are re-made. As Princess Gisdel you would be all-conquering.

We are ready to offer you almost anything you like to ask if you get that name on our bill. It would whitewash you so far as the assassination is concerned, and turn matchmaking mothers green with envy. Nothing succeeds like success. Go ahead and win back your Prince, who was at your feet, even as a king. Then indeed you will be Caroline the Great. *Au revoir*, Princess!

Your sincere well-wisher
HENRI BOULIER.

Gisdel smiled ironically and, placing the letter in an envelope, addressed it to Mademoiselle de L'Isle in his own handwriting.

CHAPTER XLV

A TERRIBLE SOLUTION

COUNT BISTOFF sent his secretary to the station, a man of tall, imposing figure, immaculately dressed. His manner towards Loti was one of extreme deference as he explained that both the Count and Countess were unavoidably prevented from meeting her as intended.

"His Majesty has requested the Countess to make certain important arrangements for the forthcoming festivities," he said, "which absolutely necessitate her remaining at the Palace all day."

"The—the wedding festivities?" gasped Loti, hardly recognizing her own voice.

"Exactly," answered the man, smiling. "It is all to take place in such a hurry that his Majesty keeps everybody busy. His impatience is natural, for he is evidently eager to claim his prize. Mademoiselle knows, perhaps, that the bride is the most beautiful lady in Europe?"

Miss Magnus inclined her head and lowered her eyes. As she listened, her heart died within her. This stranger, with the smiling face and bright, happy manner, had dealt a death-blow which killed the last spark of hope.

They were moving to the carriage and Purcell noticed how heavily Miss Magnus leaned upon her arm.

"I am a little upset by the journey, being a bad traveler," Loti stammered. "I shall feel better presently, but I turned rather faint in the train."

The secretary appeared concerned, but she assured him it was nothing serious. She knew he must notice her pallor. The dizziness, too, had returned, and a sick horror, which made talking difficult, while every thought passing through her mind became a sharp agony, like some quivering nerve exposed to the touch of a torturing knife.

As she entered the large closed carriage, drawn by a pair of magnificent horses, with two liveried men on the box, a second stranger joined the Count's secretary and handed him a letter.

He held it a moment, while Purcell arranged a light silk dust-rug over Loti's knees. Then, leaning forward, he addressed her again: "His Majesty has sent one of his gentlemen-in-waiting with this letter," he said, giving her a large sealed envelope, addressed in Maldio's writing to "Miss Magnus."

Loti took it in fingers which shook so violently that she felt ashamed of her obvious emotion. Purcell's eyes grew big with awe and wonder. Who was Miss Magnus that the highest in the kingdom, the romantic resurrected ruler, sent her a written message on arrival? Suddenly Purcell wondered whether she were traveling with some titled or possibly royal visitor who had wished to observe her incognito so strictly that even her two personal attendants were kept in ignorance of her identity.

As the carriage drove away, Loti tore the letter open. The maid could hear her quick breathing and see the agitated rise and fall of the troubled breast. Whatever her reason for coming to Lambasa, it was evident Miss Magnus had suffered acutely since Purcell told her the news of the royal engagement.

The words stared up from Maldio's paper through a mist of unshed tears.

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BELOVED LOTI: I shall call on you within an hour of your arrival at the hotel. We will then have a long talk over the present and future. Alas! the royal wedding is inevitable! I wish I could have prevented it. I will explain when we meet why it must take place. I could not bear to disappoint the people; it was forced upon me and, though at first I looked upon myself in the light of a terrible deceiver, I realize now it is the best and wisest course to pursue. I have the satisfaction of knowing my bride is the most beautiful woman and the sweetest and best in all the world, though I know you will not agree with this!

Be most careful to let no one suspect you are not Miss Magnus. I have kept your arrival absolutely secret—only the Count and Countess Bistoff know who you really are. They wanted, of course, to welcome you at the station, but I forbade them to do so, wishing to see you first myself.

I dared not meet you because of the publicity, and shall keep my visit to the hotel as secret as possible, since my every movement is chronicled. I am arranging for the manager to admit me by his own private door, as there is a small unused staircase leading to your salon.

Be sure, dear love of my free days, that whatever I may feel for my new Queen, nothing can equal the joy of that first honeymoon at Red Tower. The most magnificent wedding pageant will not thrill me as our quiet marriage in an old-world London Church one Summer morning, when my sweet Loti and I motored from Cambridge to the Altar of Hymen. Let nothing ever blot out that exquisite recollection. Then I was a man; to-day I am a king, the slave of a nation's will. God bless you—soon, soon I shall clasp you in my arms!

They say it is impossible to love two women at the same time, yet, strange to say, I love my Loti with the same thrill of passion with which I adore the fascinating Duchesse Renée, who is announced to arrive here within a few days. How weary she will grow of being stared at and cheered, of fulfilling the endless engagements which must necessarily crowd her days, wearing her out with the hard work of festivity! Does she dread, I ask myself, the constant publicity, the gay round of social duties, the strain of the long wedding-day? When I think of it all I pity her and myself.

Instead of a royal partner, instead of a queen, I close my eyes and picture the days that are dead, with one who made the world Paradise for me. Far away, then, the calls and obligations of State which engross my time, showing me that the pleasures of a regained throne are as nothing to the pleasures of a once glorious freedom.

My pen has run on, but I feel ashamed of my hurried letters in the past. I was torn on every side. My loving subjects loved me too much, gave me no leisure, no peace. Of course I am heart-delighted to feel that all is well with my kingdom, that peace reigns—but is there peace in your heart, sweet child? Alas, I doubt it!

Last night I had a terrible dream. You came to me in sleep, you told me you hated the Duchesse Renée, that royalty was abhorrent to you, and the thought of the coming wedding filled you with despair. God grant you are not in this mood, but ready to rejoice with me over what is really the great good fortune of your anxious and ever-devoted

MALDIO.

By the time Loti had read the hurriedly written words the carriage was drawing up at a great white hotel, decorated with innumerable balconies in which palm-trees waved their wide leaves, making fantastic shadows on the blinds, drawn to shut out the fierce afternoon sun. Holding the letter closely in one clenched hand, Loti passed into the palatial building, still glad of Purcell's supporting arm.

"My mistress is not feeling well," said the maid quickly, as a bowing manager advanced. "Will you please conduct us immediately to her apartments?"

Loti felt grateful to Purcell for her thoughtful words. The woman had glanced occasionally at Miss Magnus while she read the King's letter, noting how her lips twitched, while the muscles of her face contracted. Evidently there was some mystery on foot, and one which gave the young girl undoubted pain and severe mental unrest.

Loti paid no heed to the lofty rooms profusely decorated with exquisite flowers. She passed hurriedly from the white and gold salon to the rose bedchamber draped with soft silk hangings.

Snatching off her hat, she flung herself down on the lace coverlet of a pink shaded bed and, covering her eyes with her hands, bit her lips till they bled.

Purcell came softly to her side. She seemed to have no idea beyond eau de Cologne and smelling-salts, which she proffered sympathetically.

"Go away!" said Loti fiercely, her voice choked with sobs, while her heart burned with passionate resentment against Maldio's hideous insult. Purcell retired sadly, and Loti was left to her silent reflections. "Could any human being who was not a monster write such a letter of studied cruelty?" she asked herself. The suspicion she had banished as utterly base, that he might still profess affection and demand her love, was now fully justified by his callous words.

How quickly he dismissed his reasons for this step, merely saying the wedding was inevitable, forced upon him; he would explain later why it must take place! Every syllable rang in her mind. At least he confessed he had felt a deceiver, yet now brazenly acknowledged the action was wise—even applauding, for Loti's benefit, the beauty of his bride! No word of real

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regret to the discarded wife, no mention of conscience, or memory of old promises! Instead, a strong caution to keep her identity secret. He also dared to hope he might again clasp her in his arms!

Suddenly Loti sat up and dashed aside her tears. Would any sane man write to the morganatic wife and declare that he loved two women at once with the same passion? Could he, after his vows of constancy, pen such a letter if he were in his right mind?

The set lips parted, the quivering mouth dropped, as an awful solution took possession of Loti's dazed and petrified brain.

"Good heavens!" she muttered under her breath. "Maldio has gone mad, and I alone am left to discover his madness, to open the eyes of those who love and trust him!"

She sprang to her feet and called to Purcell, who promptly appeared.

"I am expecting a visitor," she said. "I must wash and change quickly. He will be here within an hour. Get me out a fresh white gown."

Already she was bathing her eyes in the soft cold water from Lambasa's health-giving springs.

CHAPTER XLVI

LAMBASA'S BRIDE

PURCELL was surprised to see the sudden change in Miss Magnus. Now she was all anxiety to master her nervous prostration, remove all traces of recent tears and dress herself in a dainty white gown for the reception of the visitor.

Loti knew she must brace herself to endure the interview, judging quickly of his manner and conduct. She remembered all he had been through, the incarceration in the tomb, the wild excitement of regaining his throne, and the strain of important negotiations affecting the welfare of his country. She felt she would know at once by his manner, his words, his looks, if some grave mental disturbance were on foot. Instead of anger, a sudden wave of maternal tenderness warmed her heart toward the offender. How utterly pathetic, if in the hour of his triumph, her Maldio had fallen a victim to the awful tragedy of madness!

Once assured that he was thus affected, she must do all in her power to save him from himself, and entreat Count Bistoff to insist upon absolute quiet and rest, abandoning all thought of a marriage which could result only in disaster.

She had kept a copy of Maldio's letter to her father, with its strongly expressed sentiments, and promises made in the name of all he held most sacred. She could show innumerable proofs of the attitude he had taken up before returning to the strain and excitement of his sensational re-entry into Lambasa.

"God help me," she murmured, "to help him! This is no time to think of my own suffering. The wild words sent to greet me are surely proof enough that something is seriously wrong. He seems to have no idea his amazing statements will cause me the slightest pang of pain!"

She glanced at the clock and moved to the window of the elaborately furnished salon. The scent of the flowers and the luxury of the artistic apartment for the first time burst upon her bewildered senses, soothing in some subtle fashion and appealing to her dazed powers of appreciation. The balcony held tall blossoming plants growing in large green tubs, while below she saw, to her horror, workmen busily erecting triumphal arches to welcome the future Queen.

Loti stepped back to blot out the unwelcome vision. Even within those four walls her sensitive spirit discerned the atmosphere of general rejoicing which magnetized the city. Again a flood of intolerable anguish threatened to shatter her courage and reduce her to a state of heartbroken collapse.

Feverishly she prayed for strength, asking herself whether possibly this meeting would be her last alone with Maldio. What if he made excuses, justifying his action? What if he talked in the same strain as that terrible letter, and yet appeared well, strong, with unclouded reason? How could she bear to listen? For a moment her resolution faltered—she would not see the King, she could not endure to hear him rave over the charms of the Duchesse Renée while swearing he loved Loti equally with his new bride!

A tap at the door startled her as if a thunderbolt had fallen. Trembling violently, she murmured a faint, "Come in."

The manager appeared and advanced smilingly, bearing a large bouquet of white

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flowers, hung with snowy ribbons. It looked like a bride's bouquet, and the sight of it turned her sick with apprehension.

"I trust," he said, "that mademoiselle is better. A gentleman from the Court has brought these flowers; they were to be placed in your room. He begs me to say that his Royal Highness is now leaving the Palace and will be with you in a few minutes. We are guarding the private staircase, as we understand he wishes his visit to be a secret one. He knows he can trust me and my staff, and I hope we have also the confidence of Mademoiselle Magnus."

THE man spoke in a meaning tone, which sent the blood to Loti's cheeks. What did he take her for, this cringing, impertinent person? She received the flowers mechanically, partly because he forced them into her hand, and their weight seemed to add to the heavy load of care torturing her soul.

"Thank you," she murmured, avoiding his eyes and turning away as if to examine the flowers. "I am still feeling unwell and wish to see no one but the King."

The man retired humbly, with a word of polite acknowledgment and another profound bow.

"Poor Duchesse Renée," she thought, as she flung the bouquet down, "these people will pity her if they believe the stranger from England is about to carry on an intrigue with their King while the wedding preparations are actually in progress! How they must inwardly despise the morals of the monarch who was always considered such an example of goodness!"

A step on the stairs caught her listening ears. She held her breath and her heart ceased beating. Then the door burst open, and Maldio, with radiant face and parted lips, came suddenly into her presence.

No sign of madness lurked in that clear, open countenance, which had never looked more handsome than in this moment of reunion.

"Loti!" he cried, stretching out his arms, and his voice vibrated with a thrill of joy.

The morganatic wife stood as if frozen, gazing at him with wide, searching eyes, full of wonder, fear and deep reproach. Seeing she did not advance, he snatched her to his heart spontaneously and smothered her face with hot, passionate kisses.

"Loti, my own, my darling, my Queen!" he gasped. "You are angry—vexed with me that the wedding must take place. It is absolutely necessary, not only to please the people, but to keep them in ignorance of our first marriage, before I knew who you really were. Angel-wife, don't make troubles in these days of wild rejoicing! Think how proud I am of you, how I long to show you off in all the glory of your wedding garments! As yet we have kept your arrival a secret—that was why I asked you to travel incognito as Miss Magnus, that we might have some quiet hours together before all the publicity and excitement. Your state apartments at the Villa Monastero are being redecorated and will be ready for you shortly. You are to remain there until the wedding-day. Lambasa must never guess we have tasted the sweets of a blissful honeymoon! Remember, beloved, we are almost strangers to each other, yet I worship already the very ground upon which my Duchesse Renée treads!"

The words poured forth so quickly that Loti could only listen in silent amazement to his mystifying speech. As he paused, she looked up quickly into Maldio's eyes, her beautiful face alight with emotion and speechless surprise. At last she gasped: "Husband—what do you mean—what does it all mean? Are you really true? You talk as if I were the royal bride!"

It was Maldio's turn to start now.

"My God!" he muttered, "is it possible your father never told you—never received my letter?"

Loti shook her head.

"Father had nothing from you," she gasped, "and he tried to stop my coming to Lambasa. He was expecting a reply."

Maldio appeared so staggered that for a moment he could hardly get his breath.

"And you," he said in a tone of horror, "were in total ignorance? You heard I was engaged to the Duchesse Renée, of royal blood, and thought it was another woman? *You did not know it was yourself?*"

He put the question almost fiercely, realizing fate had played a terrible trick upon Loti and seeing in a moment all she must have suffered.

"I—I thought I was forsaken; it nearly killed me!" she faltered. "I feared you had gone mad—I was half mad myself. I wanted to turn back, I prayed to die! But how can I be the Duchesse Renée?

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By what possible means can I share your throne as a bride of royal blood? I feel this must be some tantalizing dream, sent to increase my agony when the moment of waking comes!"

He drew her tenderly to a sofa, while she clung to him for support. With both arms round her, he whispered that this was no dream but a thrilling reality; one he could quickly explain, a romance so God-sent and wonderful that at first he had feared it must prove too good to be true. He had much to tell, and she must listen quietly and try to comprehend it all as he had done when first he learned from the Professor the tragic happenings of the past.

"Out of tragedy," he said, "from the thorny stem of a hard briar, the flowers of to-day's romance have blossomed, not only to bring us our peace and gladness, darling, but to give joy to every soul in Lambasa!"

Loti pressed closer to the heart which beat against her own.

"I am waiting, beloved," she whispered, —"waiting to hear and believe!"

CHAPTER XLVII

A HIGH DESTINY

MALDIO'S speech was always graphic, but never had he so warmed to a subject as when he explained what had occurred since their parting in England.

"You remember," he said, "the Professor's inborn horror of royalty. For that reason he never wished you to know he and his wife were not your real parents, and that the baby they adopted in infancy was the child of a family who, though royal, appeared born under a curse. The Duchesse Renée's ancestors passed through stormy times and, because of their untold misery, the Professor decided to bring up the sole survivor of the race simply as "Miss Magnus," and keep her in ignorance of her real rank and blue blood. He was your real father's English tutor, and his wife a lady-in-waiting to your unfortunate mother, as well as her life-long friend.

"Your father was cruelly murdered by political enemies, and your mother died a month later from a broken heart. You were born on the very day your father was done to death in so brutal a fashion that I prefer to spare you at present the harrowing details. You were left a penniless babe in Paris, and your father's foes cried out for even your blood.

"The Professor and his wife smuggled you to England, dressing you for the journey as a peasant's child and disguising themselves also in very poor clothes. They loved you as their own and, though the Professor always kept the papers proving your identity, he hoped he might never be tempted to reveal your history. During the days of our early friendship he was sorely tried by pangs of conscience, but his own dislike of royalty made him oppose our love in the hope that you would eventually turn your affections to a commoner.

"When he knew that the knot was tied, he then felt bound to tell me the truth. He sent me, on the very day of my departure, all the details of your birth and family, begging I would not reply until I had proved them correct, warning me he had said nothing to you upon the subject. He asked that I would permit him to tell you his own story in his own way, fearing that otherwise you might possibly misjudge him. He also said I must not reply if I felt disinclined publicly to acknowledge you as my Queen.

"I confided in Bistoff, told him everything, and he sent a trusted friend to Paris to verify the Professor's papers and assure their being genuine. On the return of this emissary, when we were convinced there could be no mistake, I wrote fully to the Professor. I told him that I was advised by Bistoff to keep my morganatic marriage secret, and that I would immediately arrange to marry you here in Lambasa, as the Duchesse Renée. If this met with his approval, he was to tell you his story and explain the strange situation.

"Arrangements had already been made for you to join me. I asked him to send me a wire if there were any objection to announcing the engagement, and, on receiving no telegram, I waited a few days and then published the news. My letter, by some singular ill chance, must have gone astray. I wonder he let you leave in ignorance, though I fancy I see his reason. The poor old man thought so badly of royal hearts that he feared I might refuse to believe that you were indeed the Duchesse Renée, and he dreaded lest you should build upon a hope which could never be fulfilled."

As Loti listened to Maldio's wonderful

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revelations, her mind could hardly grasp the marvelous news, which changed her whole life. Vaguely she recalled her strange sensations at Red Tower, when, in imagination, she pictured herself a queen, sharing Maldio's throne. All the misery of the past faded away, leaving her breathless, eager, radiant, bewildered. The youth in her expelled at once all the paralyzing effects of a recent shock. Her lover, true, passionate, adoring, held her to his heart and opened a new world to the wife who was to play her exciting rôle of fiancée and bride. Blushingly she recalled all that had been said of the Duchesse Renée's beauty, charm and goodness, realizing she had a great and inspiring reputation to uphold.

"Oh, Maldio!" she whispered, all her young loveliness blossoming again, "I am trying so hard to believe it is really true, and not a dream as I feared at first! Suddenly I find the whole world altered—I am to become another person! It is almost like being born again. No longer am I myself, the little Loti of College View, accustomed from childhood to a limited existence, developing into womanhood with only an old man and faithful servant for daily companions; nor am I Mrs. Kingsley, the bride of Red Tower. It seems impossible that my supposed father was never my father at all! When I think of him, I feel as if he could not be merely a friend and guardian, who saved my life in infancy and reared me on his own charity.

"By degrees, possibly in quite a short time, all these facts will become familiar. I shall digest them one by one, flinging myself into the part of Duchesse and Queen, knowing, however strange the position may appear, it was God's will I should be born to a high destiny, with royal blood in my veins, like yours, Maldio, like yours! Let me see—what did I read? The Duchesse Renée is a direct descendant from Louis XIV. My poor parents! How they must have suffered! If they are allowed to see their child to-day and know her gladness, surely they will rejoice with us, even though the pleasures of earth seem vain to them!"

A sudden silence fell. Just for a moment Loti fancied that the spirits of the departed must be hovering round her to bestow a parental blessing. The father who died a violent death, the broken-hearted mother, released from sorrow—surely these two looked upon the future Queen, knowing her rapture, seeing the rich reward of a great love!

For a long while Loti and the King sat in close converse in that salon of glad thoughts, bright smiles and ardent affection. Gleefully, like a boy who schemes some exciting escapade, Maldio unfolded his plans for the many festivities in store. Loti listened, her eyes glowing, her flushed cheeks like pink roses, her whole face alight with the sunshine of a radiant personality. She felt no awe as she thought of the State functions, the cheering crowds and magnificent wedding-pageant. With Maldio at her side all would be welcome and easy, while between them they shared the knowledge of a romantic past, those first sweet days in England of love's fulfilment.

"Lambasa will indeed be surprised to discover you have arrived in the Capital without their knowledge," said Maldio, laughing. "I think perhaps we might now announce your presence and take our first drive together to-morrow, chaperoned by the Countess Bistoff. I owe her much for faithful services, and during the wedding week shall raise her husband to the rank of duke. She will be here presently to bend the knee to her future Queen. I felt that neither you nor I could endure a public arrival before we had discussed this new situation alone. The press will be told that the Duchesse Renée wished to arrive incognito, to recover from the fatigue of the journey before receiving the congratulations and good wishes of the populace."

Presently word was brought that the Count and Countess Bistoff were below, inquiring whether "Miss Magnus" were sufficiently rested to grant them an audience.

The King, after consulting his fiancée's wishes, answered for her:

"The Duchesse Renée," he said, "will be graciously pleased to receive her visitors and will now drop her assumed name. If inquiries should be made, you need no longer keep her advent a secret."

The manager, who had brought the message, retired, pleasurably aware that his windows would be gazed upon with absorbing interest by every citizen in the Capital for the next twenty-four hours.

"The Palace itself," he thought, "will not be nearly so interesting this night as the hotel in which our future Queen resides."

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He thought with sorrow that the fair lady of the King's choice must shortly move to the newly decorated apartments in the Villa Monastero until the wedding ceremony gave her the right of reigning as Queen Consort in the magnificent gold-domed Palace.

Loti stood smiling a sweet welcome to the Count and Countess, who, on entering, knelt reverently at her feet, kissing the outstretched hand in devotion.

Their humility for a moment nonplused her, then, pulling herself together, she bade them rise, and, bending forward, spontaneously kissed Heldra.

"You helped your noble husband to save the King's life," she said. "I can never thank you enough!"

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE GREAT DAY

ON THE very day that Maldio was telling Loti her strange life-history, the lost letter from the King reached Professor Magnus. This missive, of such deep importance, holding a life's destiny, had strayed to a distant country. The date and certain marks on the envelope showed the vicissitudes passed through since it quitted Lambasa.

The old man was not often excited, but as he read the great news, realizing the reception awaiting Loti, his frail frame shook with violent emotion and he clasped his hands in a fervent prayer of thankfulness. Then, eagerly writing a telegram, he despatched it at once to his adopted child, directing simply to "Miss Magnus," care of Count Bistoff. He had thought out the words carefully:

The King's letter only just received. God bless the Duchesse Renée and shower blessings on the royal pair!

Loti telegraphed back, at Maldio's wish, a pressing invitation that the old man should travel by easy stages to Lambasa in order to attend the wedding ceremony. Tooth's services were offered as escort, should the Professor consent to accept the invitation.

But the man who hated all state and pomp connected with Court life resolutely declined to be tempted to Lambasa:

For me it would be a farce. I could not forget that you were already man and wife. Though I see the necessity of the public function, since your morganatic union must be buried in oblivion, I prefer to remain quietly at home, praying for your welfare, and only following you in spirit through the long strain and excitement of the great day. I can trust my Loti to act as a true queen and never forget in the luxury of her Palace and the pride of sharing a throne, those—who merely serve. I mean the poor, the struggling, the afflicted, who look to their rulers for mercy, example and purity of living. Lambasa is blessed indeed in regaining a King who has chosen such a consort. You will brighten a hitherto dark Court, stained by the crimes of the dead Horatia. I see you rising as a guiding star, you and Maldio the Thinker!

When the Professor had penned the words, he closed his eyes and pictured a friendless babe in his wife's arms, disguised by a ragged cloak and coarse knitted bonnet—a royal babe who would have been butchered by bloodthirsty ruffians. The cruel tyrants were ready, he knew, to slay the mother, had not sorrow instead signed her death-warrant.

"Oh! child of a hated race," he whispered, "shine as light in your King's Palace! Benefit by your upbringing in a humble English home!"

He smiled as he thought of her happiness, yet his eyes were full of tears, which fell upon the letter as he signed his name.

THROUGH the lofty aisles of Lambasa's gorgeous Cathedral the sun streamed in floods of glory upon a notable assembly. Men in dazzling uniforms, ladies in Court dress, and, standing at the altar rails, one of the fairest brides the world had ever seen.

On this great wedding-day Loti's soul seemed to radiate her face with a supernatural beauty. Maldio's strong, handsome features wore an expression of reverential worship as for the second time he made his vows of constancy to the woman he loved, in firm, clear accents which ran through the stately building.

Close to the royal couple stood a tall Englishman, Mortimore Dugdale, side by side with the King's deliverer, the Duc de Monastero.

In every breast throughout that great Cathedral dwelt the memory of a recent burial, enhancing the wonder of to-day's impressive scene. The tension was almost painful, until the thrilling wedding-march swelled forth, announcing the triumphal

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exit of the bridegroom and his Queen. As the smiling pair descended the Cathedral steps to enter their state coach, the booming of a military salute accompanied the wild cheering of frantic crowds, half mad with joyful excitement.

"The buried King! The buried King!" shouted hysterical voices. "Given back to us by Heaven! Long live the Thinker! Long live Maldio's bride!"

As Loti bowed her acknowledgments to the great mass of eager faces on that short drive from Cathedral to Palace, she remembered the old question she had asked herself so often: "Can a man be true?"

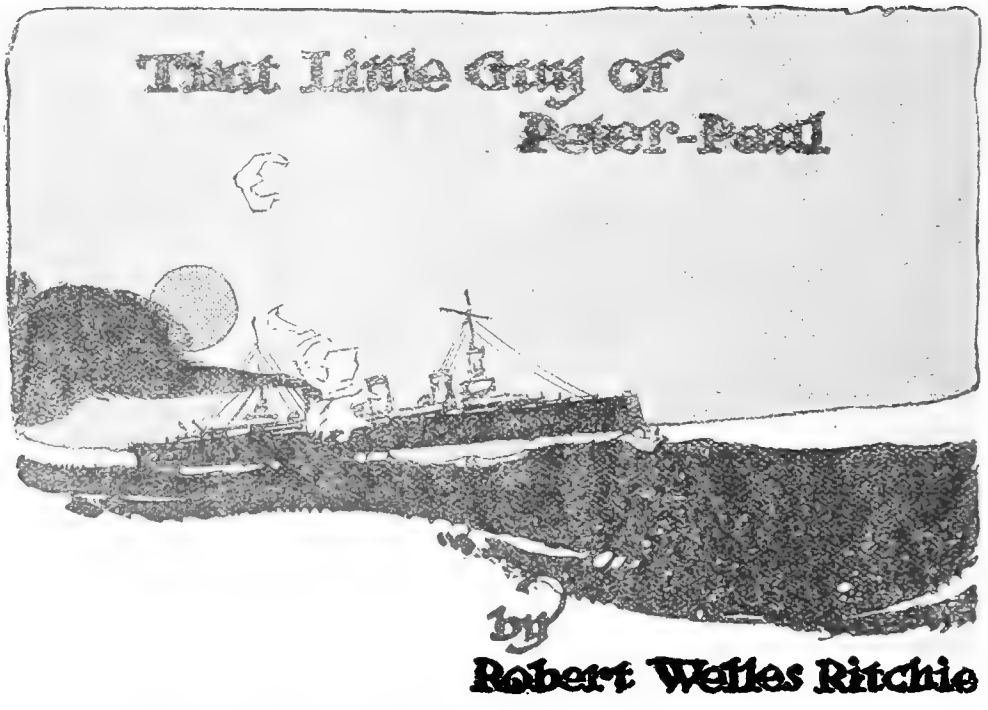
From the depths of her heart she answered "Yes! True as a man, true as a King, true as lover and husband! Maldio, my more than lover, my tried bridegroom of unroyal days!"

The secret hidden beneath the filmy veil of Lambasa's new Queen warmed Loti's heart.

"He was mine in the past, he is mine again now," she thought fondly. "He will be mine forever!"

"I think, after all, sweetheart," he whispered, "the second wedding is even better than the first!"

THE END



THIS is the tale, hitherto overlooked by history, of the capitulation of Petropaulovsky, of the schoolmaster's white waistcoat and of Jan Michaelovich's cow, who died for the Czar. I tell it to you as Captain Miles Reilly of the Spreckels steamship *Montara* told it to me one night down in the smoky bar of Clausen's seamen's hostel in Yokohama.

Since Reilly is the original source of this bit of neglected history, and even the Japanese with their infinite love for detail, have not allowed the story of their victory at Petropaulovsky to be unlocked from the ideographs of some War Office report in Tokyo, a word of introduction is due Reilly. He first came to Yokohama one June day in 1905, and his visit was hardly one of pleasure. The first time I saw him was about three hours after his ship, the *Montara*, had been sequestered at the Yokosuka naval station, and Reilly, red-faced and explosive, was sitting in a chair in the Kencho, or municipal building of Yokohama, and answering questions as to why he had

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been careless enough to attempt to run the blockade into Vladivostok with contraband below decks. He had been guilty of carrying succor to the enemies of his Majesty, the Emperor of Japan. A fusty little judge with eyes like rice-grains held the *Montara's* captain as a witness to answer in behalf of his company before a prize court.

So Captain Reilly came to Yokohama, and he remained there for many hot months, contemptuous of the lantern parades that marked each fresh victory of the Japanese arms in Manchuria, harboring always a deep and cumulative hatred of all Japanese and of the procrastinating prize court judges in particular.

It was over a chance glass of Fernet Blanca, there in Clausen's rialto of the deep-sea men, that the *camaraderie* of exile brought Reilly and myself together. After we had conned all of the familiar corners of San Francisco, praised the *con-carne* that Matias used to sell, and remembered the Santa Cruz rum-punch that lurked in the shadows of Gibbs's place, Reilly naturally dropped into an exhaustive review of the total depravity of the Japanese character, their "—— polite kow-towing just when they was ready to stick a knife in a white man's back." That, of course, led to the story.

"NOW the Spreckels people naturally knew they were taking a long chance when they loaded up the old *Montara* with flour and oil and hard food stuffs and shipped me off with her to make Vladivostok," was Reilly's introduction. "But they didn't much care if the Japs should take a notion to send a solid shot through her engines, which would have dropped through the old hulk's bottom if the chief engineer should sneeze hard. So the chance for profit was a long one, and the Spreckels people were game as I was, and off we went from 'Frisco to run the blockade to Vladivostok.

"And you can bet your this year's bonnet that we hadn't got through the Gate before that nosey little Jap consul on California Street had sent a code message to Tokyo, telling all about us, even down to what size collar I wore. I happened to know before we left that little Mister Haniha-ha, or whatever's his name, was slipping some loose coin around Crowley's boathouse and other water-front hang-outs and was getting pretty near all there was to know about ships clearing for shady ports in the war zone and what they carried under their hatches. Of course, we were cleared in the papers for Valparaiso, but I guess that didn't fool little Mister Consul any."

The Captain stretched himself over the table and drew a sketch of the North Pacific in the liquor slop on its dingy surface. Here was Vancouver; up here the Aleutians, which they had skirted in following the Canadian Pacific track around the great circle. He dropped a bent match opposite the American coastline; that represented the northernmost islands of Japan, Hokkaido and the little beads of the Kuriles which drop from the peninsula of Kamchatka to enclose the Sea of Okhotsk.

"Now, to get to Vladivostok we either had to slip through La Perouse straits—that's up here north of Hokkaido, and there was every chance that the Japs had it watched—or we had to bite our way through the fogs up off Kamchatka and come down inside the Kuriles. That was longer and just about as dangerous as risking the blockade cruisers. I chose the northern course, and after I'd got across the Pacific I put in at Copper Island, a God-forsaken bunch of seal rocks that stick up through the fog blanket off the southeast coast of Kamchatka. The Russians own the island and they have a fur station there with about a half company of soldiers to guard it.

"His Whiskers, the Commandorffsky, told me that he'd heard there was a war; some sealing captain had dropped in on him about five months before and had said that Russia and Japan were fighting each other. But beyond that general information my friend the Commander didn't know anything. I broke it easy to the old boy about Liau-Yang and Port Arthur and all that. He cried into his champagne, but I had made conversation and that's what he was most in need of. He also bought some of my cargo because, as he said, his Government at Vladivostok seemed to have forgotten him and the provision ship from that port was six weeks overdue. When I gathered that nothing like a Jap cruiser had been seen in the neighborhood of Copper Island for two years and more, I thought it was safe to make a break for Vladivostok, about four days away.

"Well, sir, just a day out from Copper Island we ran smack into 'em—or they into

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us would be better, I guess. The Japs, sure. First a smudge of smoke down on the eastern horizon away up there in the cold ocean where no steamers ply; then the lift of two military tops and the thick clouds from the stacks which show they're using the forced draft. Just that little picture to send the chills down my back—and then the blessed fog!"

It was at this point in the narrative that Reilly allowed himself the first smile. It lit up his red face like a Hallowe'en pumpkin; there was so much of cherished spite in it.

"What do I do? Why, turn the old *Montara* half way round so quick she nearly loses her stack, and set her due north, just at right angles to the line she was keeping. Smash through the fog, thicker 'n molasses. An hour on this course without a peek at the Jap cruiser, then another switch to eastward. It was hare and hound on a forgotten ocean, with me on the bridge listening to the panky-pank of those rickety old engines down below and wondering how anybody west of the Farallones could help nosing out that racket like a steam-fitter going it in a boiler-factory.

"Yep, we gave that cruiser the slip, but I made up my mind right then that there was no Vladivostok in mine. That's where the Jap would think we were going, and he'd be sure to race ahead to try to head us off. So I looked over the chart like a man trying to find his hotel in a strange port, just wondering where in that thousand miles of forgotten coast I could make a landing. There, away up on the Siberian coast, was a little dot with a string of letters stretching out over the ocean like a chain of coal barges:—P-E-T-R-O-P-A-U-L-O-V-S-K-Y. Peter and Paul looked good to me and I decided I'd drop in and see how they liked the weather up there. We made it in two days, after missing being piled up on the rocks in the fog a half dozen times.

"Son, take it from me,"—here Reilly dropped his voice to an impressive monotone— "I've been to some of the bargain-counter remnants of civilization and I've seen coasts where men go mad just because of the lonesomeness of things; but Punta Arenas is a roaring metropolis alongside of Petropaulovsky, and Djibouti a city of sweet delights. Just a string of one-story stone houses stretched along a shingle beach, with the black hills jumping up right behind, their stiff firs tearing the eternal fog into tatters as it piles in from the sea. Maybe there are two hundred people in the town—poor fishermen and whalers and half-breed Aleuts. Every once in a blue moon in peace times a Russian gunboat puts in there from its sealing patrol, and then everybody knocks off work and has a vodka holiday. Even the dogs have forgotten to hold their tails up."

Reilly threw out his arms in an expansive gesture and grinned reminiscently.

"Oh, they were that glad to see me, the poor devils! The Government had forgotten them, too; just like it had forgotten the Copper Island folks. They were awfully short on the grub because the usual supply ship from Vladivostok hadn't come up. The Commandorffsky put on his full uniform of a Cossack general, or something like, and came right out to the *Montara* to buy everything I had below decks. Some of his men began to unload on to a leaky lighter before I'd had my anchor down an hour, and all the inhabitants were lined up on the beach to buy flour and beans and sugar just as soon as the lighter should be towed to shore. Pretty simple, life in Peter-Paul town, I take it! The Government agent is the good father and the people buy from him—always, of course, allowing him his little graft on the side, which is Russian courtesy.

"As to the war, the Petropaulovskies didn't know much more about it than the Copper Island folks. Yes, they said, there might be a war; but that was the Government's business and it was so far away! What difference if there was fighting a thousand miles below?"

THE Captain of the *Montara* took a long sip of his drink, then carefully put a light to a twisted Mexican cigar. His pause was the artful step-off to the dénouement. Almost in a whisper he continued:

"The very next morning after I arrived they came—yep, the Japs. It was the cruiser which I'd skipped in the fog. Evidently, when they found that I wasn't on the Vladivostok course, they made the same guess I had and hurried up to Peter-Paul town to get me. It wasn't a large cruiser as cruisers go. I suppose, as a matter of fact, that you'd rate it as a third-classer. But when that worship steamed around the

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point and into that mournful harbor, with its sun-ray flags at both trucks and the thick barrels of six-inch guns spiking out from the gray sides, it was an A No. 1 Dreadnaught, and don't you have any doubts on that!

"The cruiser came on, kind of pussy-footed; just feeling its way down the channel like a terrier stalking a rat-hole. A bugle sounded. Then in a minute—*Whang!* A bunch of gray wool jumped out from the port side and over on the hill back of town there was a red blotch and a geyser of rock kicked up. I was surprised. First I thought that they'd made a mistake and that they ought to be firing a shot over my own trucks to pay me for my impudence. Then I remembered that this was a Russian town and I knew what was doing. 'Sebastopol all over again,' says I to my first officer.

"I ran my eye shoreward. Say, you've seen cockroaches run when you turn on the light? Just a streak and they're gone! Well, that's what was happening in Peter-Paul town just then. The citizens were dusting for the tall woods behind the houses —men, women and kids just touching the high places.

"*Blam!* went another shot from the Jap cruiser, and I cussed the heathen out for the shame of it. But it was a pretty shot; it shaved off the Russian flag which was flying over the Commandorffsky's house and landed in a pasture where some mad cows were galloping around. Just when the smoke of it was shredding away I saw a little figure come running down the single street to the wharf; he was the only moving thing in Petropaulovsky. The little man jumped quickly into an exceedingly small boat and began to scull himself over the bay straight for the hostile Jap cruiser.

"'Well, here's a go!' I says to my first officer. 'One little Peter-Paul man going out to tackle the Jap navy; the more glory to him!'

"When the Japs saw him coming they evidently didn't know what to make of it. Anyway, they didn't do any more shooting, and for ten minutes that mournful harbor was as still as a church. The man in the boat worked his oar like mad until he was right out in the middle of the harbor about half-way to the cruiser. Then he suddenly dropped his oar and began peeling off his coat. Then he peeled off a white vest he wore under his jacket. He took the vest and tied it to the end of his oar, then lifted the oar over his head and waved it back and forth with all his strength.

"Say,"—Reilly chuckled—"what do you suppose that poor little guy was doing? Why, he was surrendering Petropaulovsky with a white vest right under the guns of the Jap cruiser when the Commandorffsky and every other blessed man jack of them were in the tall timbers! Nerve? what!

"And his surrender was accepted by the Jap commander. Then the cruiser sent a boat over to me to accept the surrender of the *Montara*—which they got without any bloody conflict.

"To finish up this yarn I ought to say that the little man who was bravest in Peter-Paul town was Jan Michaelovich, the schoolmaster. The town had been captured with only one fatality, as the newspapers say—that second shell had killed Jan's only cow. And I will say, for the credit of the Japs, that they paid him for that cow, and they left all the food the *Montara* had brought before they took my ship in convoy down here to Japan."

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A Polished Ruffian

by Thomas Samson Miller

THE Niger swirled past Igobo in a clay-yellow flood. The trading compound was deserted, though a harmonica and the patter of dancing naked feet from a shed told where the negroes congregated. Beyond the barbed-wire gates rose the conical thatches of the hibernating village, where Igobians huddled miserably over charcoal fires until the dry season should come again. Beyond, again, lay an inky-black, drenched world. At the Europeans' house the *punka* scooped monotonously above Marshall and his sub-agent Harris as they sorted and pieced together a litter of abused mail by the wan light of a hurricane lantern.

Harris, exasperated over a futile search for the second part of a torn letter, exclaimed belligerently:

"I could smash the rascal who rifled this mail; some poor beggar up-river would give much for this letter. Why did the niggers meddle with it, anyway? It wasn't of any use to them.

"It's a girl writing to some one," he went on, looking down on the torn sheet he held. "Listen:

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND:

I haven't written to you for a long time—I didn't dare, because I was so ashamed of what Keith had done. But he couldn't help it—really and truly he couldn't. He said you had given him something valuable to bring home and he had let them rob him of it, and that the Niger Company had found him a berth in Brazil and that he would never face you again. But now he is gone; Mama and I talked it over and we think you should know that Keith didn't mean to be mean—he isn't mean; he's a *dear* brother and I know he isn't mean. *Please*, Mr. Gladstone, write and say that you forgive him; it will help him and us so much. If you come home and will come to see us, we will make his room ready, and I will show you my garden. I often think of the happy days we had together in Las Palmas—do you remember the little Spanish babies?—weren't they dears? If you will——"

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Barbarous hands had ruthlessly destroyed the rest.

"We oughtn't to have read that, I suppose," said Harris. "For Gladstone! A deuced odd letter for him—he's such a ruffian."

"I didn't know you had met him," said Marshall, and, not noticing the curious expression that flitted across his subordinate's face, went on in defense of Gladstone: "He isn't what you'd call so bad, when you dig down. His worst vice is the whisky-bottle, and that was not sottishness so much as one drowning rage. I've always held the notion that if he had been placed in a different environment instead of being thrown into 'palm-oil ruffianism' so young, he'd have developed qualities—I've seen him do things, big things, and I've seen him on the rampage, usually after the arrival of the mail-bag that meant nothing to him. I tell you I've felt sorry for him—sorry for the something fine choked up in the man. Besides, we hurl that term 'Ruffian' at him too soon; he's young yet—can't be more than twenty-six or eight."

A voice from the veranda cut in dryly:

"Well done, judge-advocate!"

A tall, gaunt white stood in the entrance to the chop-room, flapping the water from his mackintosh.

"A pretty fine set of watchmen you have; I got my canoe right into your compound without challenge. If you held down my station among the Fullani your lives wouldn't be worth a Bath bun!" He held out his hand.

Marshall rose and gripped silently, chagrined at being caught so slovenly. Gladstone offered his hand to Harris without looking up. The latter had risen with Marshall, and was standing with livid face and quarrelsome attitude, his hand behind his back. Gladstone acted surprised, then caught up the lantern and threw the yellow light full into the other's face with rude effectiveness. He bawled recognition:

"Hullo, it's the kid! Learned to shoot yet?"

Harris flushed a deeper red, struggled to master his emotions for a retort, then suddenly fled the room and a door slammed on his rage.

Gladstone coolly took the vacated seat, tossed his pith helmet on the table, swept aside the mail, then threw back his mackintosh, disclosing a small monkey cuddled inside his soft shirt, blinking sleepily in the sudden light. Then he dragged toward him a whisky-bottle which a black had, with free West African hospitality, set before him.

Said Marshall, "What's the trouble between you and Harris?"

"Oh, nothing, though the cub did pull a gun on me."

"Harris pulled a gun on you!" Marshall vainly tried to reconcile the Harris he knew with such bravado.

Gladstone chuckled in his throat, then fell to drumming his bony knuckles thoughtfully on the table. Suddenly he leaned forward and opened out:

"Look here, Marshall, you're the first man who ever pretended to see good in me, and, by Jove! I'll go back and give you the whole thing—I'm in the mood to indulge self-pity. Tell your nigger to set the sparklet bottles handy and vamoose. Good! Now we can talk."

He settled back in his split-cane seat and as he talked, the other man noted unconscious, pitiful flashes of things that contrasted oddly and painfully with the superimposed sneer and simulated indifference.

II

"'RUFFIAN' you called me—oh, I ain't kicking, I've done a little to earn the epithet. Yet, for all that, there was a time when I clambered up into respectability. You wouldn't think I was once bosom friend to a slip of a girl who delighted in love-stories and babies and flowers; slipped through life with a half-breathed, 'I wouldn't dare,' and clung to 'mama'—me with years of doubtful life written all over me. Mind, I say 'doubtful,' for there was always a chalked line to my spleen. Then there was the Boy—not your Harris; he's only an accidental episode at the end.

"Maybe I ought to start out this story as it started with me during a joy-time I was having at Las Palmas. I like Las Palmas—a shilling there brings you a bottle of good Madeira; sixpence conjures up a heap of those pungent black cheroots, and, above all, you haven't got to be respectable. There my story opens, me leaning against the lintel of that little Spanish inn that splotches the road that climbs the vineyards behind the town, sousing my wine-stupored head in the strong sunlight and the slaty

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breeze—you know how it fans in there from those sweeps of Atlantic.

"My eyes happened to drop to the English hotel that makes a green oasis in the white road which drops down from the town to the wharves. I could see the flanneled figures of the respectable world strolling about the Catalina gardens and could faintly sniff the breakfast bacon and coffee which follows civilization around the globe, when suddenly I was interested in a Panama and a white suit sneaking through a banana grove toward the rear gardens of the hotel. I watched and saw it disappear into the gardens. 'Ah, ah!' thought I, 'I'm not the only cat out o' nights; I'll go down for breakfast and spot my gay bird; he'll be surprised.'

"I swung down behind the gay fifes and drums of a company of marching soldiers and hurried through the Catalina grounds to the rear tennis courts—simply curious to see my night-bird.

"I found myself in a narrow cacti-hedged walk and my path suddenly blocked by a delectable missy of northern climes and prettiness—raven-black coils bound compactly to a well-poised head and girlishly set off with a white band; girlish, too, were the lithe, vibrant figure and delicate chiseling of the lips—just such a girl as my youth had often cried to know, but hopelessly removed from me by the brand of 'Charity Boy' put upon me by foundling hospital and orphans' home. There you have my offense and my grouch—'Charity Boy.'

"I advanced, but she made no move to step aside, though she had turned on me a face that waited on the balance-spring of tears and foolish courage. Now I saw that she was sentineling, and with the observation came a malicious determination to expose her secret.

"But the chit was resourceful; a half-twist of her body, a swish of skirt and she was caught on the cacti thorns and appealing to me with a pair of big, shy, hazel eyes to free her. Down I went on one knee and, thorn by thorn, released the skirt and then started on the fringing lace of a petticoat. Lord! the little fool trembled like an aspen, and whimpered in a lost voice, 'It doesn't matter—really—*please*—rip it—' But I finished my work in my own time and rose, grinning, to see a little lady in gray coming from the guarded end of the walk. The girl turned to her with a bleat of 'Mama' and sneaked into her arm, and there they stood, interlocked for mutual protection against wicked me, the girl's young head bowed a little to rest against Mama's.

"That 'Mama,' and the picture of the two entwined women, perfect in each other's confidence, stirred in me dissatisfactions I had thought long since drowned; I have lived on the outside of everything embraced in that word, and, from a sulky antagonism to the world that shunned me, I had accepted that grosser world. One has to creep in somewhere. I stood there listening to the thanks of the gray lady and then I made a get-away soon's I could and went on down the path, completely jolted out of my complacency.

"Presently I found myself in an arbor, over which lay the scent of cigarette smoke. 'Ah, ah!' thought I, 'Mama has been clandestinely meeting a man.' I leaped to a rustic seat and peered over the cacti into a banana grove. A young figure in white flannels and Panama was hurrying up to town between the shrubs, and I, Palm-Oil-Ruffian, et cetera, was shocked, disgusted, angry!

"BUT I couldn't rid my mind of the pretty innocence of the two women standing there entwined. So strong was the call of the picture that I sent a porter to bring down my baggage and went and inscribed my name in the register, over the only address I boast, the Royal Niger Company. I slunk to a rocker in the palmed foyer, like a mongrel into kennels of the groomed and pedigreed, to sit and con over this humor.

"And pretty soon there came Slip-of-a-Thing and Mama, the latter quietly crossing to a settee, while the girl glided to the hotel book, like a kid stealing to a jam-jar, and frowned over the names. I saw her start as she lighted on mine, throw up her head and scan the rotunda with those big eyes of hers; then she crossed to Mama and whispered eagerly. The little lady got up and went to the desk and spoke to the clerk. Next moment he was coming over to me.

"'Mr. Gladstone,' said he, 'there's a Mrs. Chisholm over there'd like an introduction; she's dead interested in Nigeria.'

"Next moment I was bowing to Mama and listening to her timid apologies.

"'You will pardon the liberty, Mr. Gladstone, but we—this is my daughter—

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are terribly interested in your country, for one very near and dear to us is ordered out in the service of your Niger Company. Won't you sit down, please, here, between us? We have been reading Mary Kingsley's book about the Oil Rivers and are thoroughly frightened.'

"Huh! the times I have seen cubs, induced out by the Company's Elysian ad.—'Opportunity for Young Gentleman of Good Education and Fond of Outdoor Tropical Life, for Position of Importance and Command,' wilting under Mary Kingsley's gory stories of savagery and fever! And Mrs. Chisholm's face is on mine, all awry with suspense, while the girl turns those big orbs on me as if I held suspended the execution ax.

"What was there to do but to lie? So I fell to: 'Country ain't so bad, if one takes precautions. . . . Fever? Oh, one soon gets inoculated. . . . Niggers are all right if you handle 'em right. Friendly? Well, yes, on the whole. . . . There's good shooting. . . . ' So I charmed the color back to the cheeks. They couldn't thank me enough. Said Mama:

" 'Oh, Mr. Gladstone, I am so glad we met you; you have comforted me so much!' The girl breathed, 'Perhaps our—our friend will be able to go to Nigeria with you.'

"I was asking myself if the One-Very-Near-and-Dear-to-Us was the youth of the cacti-arbor meeting. But those two women worked me for the soft thing; before we left our seats I had promised to take their 'friend' under my wing.

III

"AND that's how my intimacy with two lone women commenced. I, Palm-Oil Ruffian, Charity Boy, Pariah, became bosom friend to Slip-of-a-Thing; swiped flowers—big, red, starry things—poinsettias, she called 'em; filled my pockets with seashells that 'prisoned animals,' she'd say, screwing up her face with fear and feminine curiosity. Huh! how I have laughed to think I should play Big Dane to her caresses!

"But I didn't laugh then. You must remember that she was the first white girl who had ever come intimately into my life. I fell for the music of the trill in her voice and her babbled innocent nothings, like a lovesick kid. From the moment of that first meeting in the cacti-walk I had felt a new world opening to me through the frank friendship of those two women. I heard the word 'Love' from the girl's lips a score of times daily—'I *love* it,' or 'It is d-e-a-r,'—and love took on a meaning far different from that caned into me at the orphanage Bible hours.

"So I thought I had got on to something big in the girl;—never saw that 'twas just her nature's response to pleasing things—skies, song-birds, flowers, babies. Not till later, when I tried to sweat out the puzzle in those hell-months at N'Gombi, after the boy had—but that's jumbling the story. Oh, no, I basked in the dream of an ingenuous friendship. How close we really got to each other you can judge by this: 'Isn't it funny,' she trilled once, 'that we have known each other only a week and I am telling you things I haven't even told Mama!' She was stroking my hand as it lay on my knee with her kittenish caress.

" 'Why, Little One,' said I, 'it's funnier than that; it's so funny for me to find myself walking and talking with a girl like you that I keep pinching myself awake.'

" 'Oh, then you have no sisters?'

" 'Sisters! why, I haven't a relative on the globe!'

" 'But you must have some people?'

" 'People, is it? If you want to see my people, take the Southwestern from Waterloo Station and look out the right side of your carriage, just as London is thinning out into somber marshes, and you will see a bald granite building set behind spiked railings in an asphalted playground or drill-ground. You'll see sulky-featured children playing without any frolic or laughter, and if your mother had held you up when a baby to look into that laughterless playground you'd have seen a lad standing in the correction corner—seems to me I was always standing in that correction corner.'

"Her big eyes were taking me in with sympathetic curiosity. Then she put her little hand in mine, breathing, 'Oh, I *am* sorry! You must make your home with us; I'll ask Mama; but I know she'll say yes.'

"Perhaps you think that's a little thing, but it bowled me over—ten-odd years of outcast driftings, and then to find *home*. And Mama backed up the invitation—a little distraitly, for she had her own trouble,—she and the Little One were shielding the

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young scamp who still came to the cacti-arbor. Like me, they were playing a lone hand against the world; the girl still made sneaks to the register, and the fright of both when an outbound boat was due was pitifully evidenced in the girl's quick inspection of new faces and in Mama's nervousness.

"ONE day the SS. *Calabar* was posted due from Liverpool for the Coasts and my holiday was come to an end if I would be back in time to relieve the N'Gombi agency, which the A. G. had promised me. I went to find the Chisholms, to tell them that their 'friend' must be making his arrangements, if he were coming with me. I found them at the bottom of the croquet-lawns, Mama knitting woolen fever-belts for One-Very-Near-and-Dear-to-Us. I suppose my face told them the news; they both sprang to their feet in nervous flurry.

" 'You are going?' cried Mrs. Chisholm. 'Oh, my boy, my boy!'

"The girl put her arm around the thin shoulders and comforted her: 'But, Mama dear, Mr. Gladstone is going with him—has promised to look after him!' She looked up to me: 'You *promised*, you know.'

"So I had; but I hated that the cub should get all the sentiment of the parting. I tell you, love is selfish—as selfish in humans as in animals; don't the leopardess snatch the kid from the goat to provide for her own young? This boy was their god; at the pinch I wasn't in it. But I took my medicine and fell to discussing a plan to get the boy quietly embarked.

IV

"SO WHEN the *Calabar* nosed round the breakwater in the afternoon I took my baggage in a pony-cart up to a town address and picked up a kit-bag and a cabin-trunk, which I checked at the steamship offices, all as my own. Then I engaged a Spanish boatman to wait at the customs stairs for a certain passenger, and, that done, I took the ship's launch, a little sore that the cub should monopolize the parting.

"As I climbed the gangway a voice hailed me from the promenade-deck, 'Hullo, Gladstone!'

"Looking up, I saw the monkey face of that pippin-headed halfbreed, Macdonald, of the Macdonald & Goldenberg Factory in the Calabar stream. What! don't you know the firm? Why, they were in the river before the Niger Company was hatched. Macdonald was skipper and part owner with Goldenberg of a three-master that ran between London and the Oil Rivers, where he traded over the bulwarks, awing the natives with a loaded cannon on the poop. Goldenberg looked after the London end.

"That's how I came to the Coasts, bound apprentice-slave to that Scotch ruffian Macdonald, after a dash for liberty that impaled me on the playground's spiked railings. If ever my story aboard the *Clan Macdonald* comes to be written, it will be my apology, and the explanation of that word 'Ruffian' they throw at me! And here, looking down on me from the promenade-deck and familiarly using my name, was the kinky-haired, brat offspring of Macdonald and King Umbulla's daughter—the little beast they cuffed me into nursing, until I called the trick and, one night as we lay in the delta, slipped overboard into the canoe of an up-river chief and lay *perdu* until we came to Onitsha. Lord! how my fingers had itched to choke that kid!

"He beckoned me up and drew me to the rail, out of earshot of a seaman, his manner darkly mysterious:

" 'Say, Gladstone, how are you making it with the Niger Company? They treating you better?'

" 'What do you mean?'

" 'Oh, come!' His green eyes peered into mine inscrutably. 'Are they paying you your money's worth, or are they calculating that a man who has spent half a life on the Coast is about fit for nothing else and at their mercy. Why don't you have a shot at Macdonald & Goldenberg? We could use you. It's talked around that you are going to have the N'Gombi agency.'

" 'Talked around nothing! You nosed it out, you mean!' snapped I, mad at his impudent talk of *using* me.

" 'Well,' says he boastfully, 'we *have* got a friend or two in your Company. But what about it? We'll give you a better contract than the Niger Company'll ever give.'

" 'What are you after? Out with it, straight!'

" 'Look here, Gladstone, we want to get a footing at N'Gombi, and if you could lay hands on a treaty with the Serekai, why,

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there's no knowing what we mightn't give for it.'

" 'And what makes you think the Niger Company have overlooked him?'

" 'Pshaw! It is well known that your people offended him irretrievably when their political agent made palaver with his vassal, the Sheik Abd Adkar. Look, Gladstone, we've got this thing figured out pretty well. A trade treaty with Antagora lets us right into the Company's richest territory, and to get there we would be willing to part with ten—thousand—pounds!'

"That's how the devil put temptation up to me, and a week before I'd have snapped it up; but now came the whisper of Slip-of-a-Thing, 'It wouldn't be fair.' At the same moment I heard a step coming up behind and turned to look into her eyes—or their duplicates under a Panama. Oh, he was the very spirit of the girl—the same tremulous lips and oval, sensitive face.

"He quickly forestalled the name with which I was about to address him: 'Mr. Gladstone, I think? My name is George Smith.' (The young fool had taken an alias that would spot him to a detective out of a thousand.) 'We have mutual friends.'

"The girl's very voice! My heart went out to him then and there with my hand. I introduced him to Macdonald. The kid gave the barest preceptible nod, in that blind conceit of our white youth—their superiority over the colored world—refusing Nigger Macdonald's outstretched hand. I thought Macdonald was going to choke; and never have I seen a face so suddenly, so viciously ugly. A moment he glared at the boy, then swung on his heels and away.

" 'WELL, kid,' said I, 'you bring a proper spirit to a country where the whites number but one to the colored millions! That fellow will treasure that up against you, and this world is a mighty small place for revenge to stalk.'

"But the boy was straining his eyes to the customs stairs, where two women fluttered handkerchiefs. At that moment the screws began to thresh the water, and I, too, developed a sentimental interest in that white bunting, until we were around the breakwater and standing out to the high seas. The boy laughed—the laugh of one suddenly relieved.

" 'Oh!' said I, 'you laugh, and you can afford to now; we have a saying in the rivers that "Palm-Oil-Ruffianism is sanctuary." But what are you staring at?'

" 'N—nothing. Are those things on the water flying-fish? See them skim!' he cried, like an eager kid.

"I focused my eyes on him pretty sharply, trying to reconcile such ingenuous delight in simple things with my preconceptions of him as one escaping justice and selfishly involving women in his crime, but his open face baffled me; I did not then know that there are negative characters neither moral nor immoral. He was the girl's twin soul—the same enthusiasms and quick responsiveness; his deep-breathed absorption of the life of the Gold Coast, the crazy negro towns, the chanting Kroomen of the surf boats, the bleached fringe of Africa, the sudden tornadoes, the 'ship that passes in the night,' were all topics for speculation and story.

"In him I lived the youth I had missed. He swept away any lingering remnants of my old life that had survived the girl's attack. What he had done in the old country concerned me not; indeed, I quite forgot the shadow upon him until reminded of it by nigger Macdonald. Said he, 'Your young friend Smith has his baggage initialed "K. C." and has a book inscribed, "To Keith Chisholm, from his sister Alison." A word to the wise, Gladstone.'

"I gave Macdonald the devil for sneaking!

"We were come to the delta and were dropping anchor in the Forcadoes; a flotilla of canoes, a stern-wheeler and Macdonald's launch—the beast boasted his private launch—were hurrying out to us. Macdonald beat a retreat before my quarrelsome mood, and then the boy came up with eager questioning. 'Do we debark here, Mr. Gladstone? Are there gorillas in that jungle? Have you ever shot one? Are all the negroes naked like those canoemen? Is that the Company's flag flying on the stern-wheeler?'

"I have crossed that delta a few hundred times, but never under such conditions as then. I found myself buffer between the kid's romance and the ghastly truth of those exotic jungles. We stayed to wood at Gana Gana and found the agent sitting at table staring with glazed eyes, an assagai stuck through his back, and every nigger fled to the bush. At Iddah—but you know those delta factories. So we came to Lo-

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koja, and the A. G. ordered me to take canoe and rush through at once to relieve N'Gombi. I asked for the boy for assistant —made a point of it, and got him.

"Followed days that were an extravaganza to the kid. The slow crawl past whispering fronded forests, which echoed back the chant of our canoemen; then the breathing starlit nights and sassawood fire, and the pompous chieftains at N'Kassa and Lombi; the fantastic dance of the devil-worshipers, all exalted the kid into fairy-land.

V

"HE FELL into his work as if born to it —oh, it was good to me to hear his voice piping orders to niggers, any of whom could have taken him in his arms like a baby. They dubbed him Ankaluka, literally, 'He Who Laughs,' and, indeed, he was always laughing at their queer customs and pigeon English. I tell you, Marshall, that boy owned me body and soul, and there was nothing unsaid between us, excepting the trouble in the old country.

"Then his letters from home brought postscripts to me from Slip-of-a-Thing, which developed into an exchange of whole letters, in which I was 'Very Dear Friend,' and their every simple sentence brought back to me the cooing, ingenuous missy of the Catalina gardens: 'I am often thinking of you and your kindness to Mama and me,' and, 'On the ship I went home by, I saw a man from Nigeria with a dear little monkey. I would love to have one like it. I would take great care of it.' And that is how I came by this little rascal in my shirt; cost a nigger a broken arm in catching it, it did. Oh, yes, I treasured her phrases and banked my soul on her and Mama and the boy; and went bankrupt. I dreamed away the few odd years' difference in our ages and built an air-castle that only lacked money to materialize it.

"And here it was that Nigger Macdonald's proposition began to insinuate itself into my head, while my pulse pumped to one refrain, 'Ten—thousand—pounds, Ten—thousand—pounds, Ten—thousand—pounds.' And it was then, with every fiber in me reaching to that money, that the opportunity itself came in the annual visit of the Serekai of Antagora.

"He came in his gaily-flagged royal barge, heading a procession of forty fifty-foot canoes, loaded to the gunwales with rich barter, which he would maliciously display before every trading station of the Company from N'Gombi to the delta, and there the Germans, Dutch and Portuguese fought for the spoils. The old rascal would stop at every one of our stations and fool the agent into a deceiving joy that he was willing to trade, until he had exhausted the agent's patience and hospitality, when he'd pick a quarrel and pass on.

"But this time he fell completely under the spell of young Chisholm. I never saw anything like it! The kid was suffering from a bad dose of homesickness, which followed on malaria, but the Serekai's arrival dispelled it, evoking a delighted and innocent interest in Antagora's half-score phlegmatic wives and his witch-doctor's absurd stunts. The Serekai, on his part, took a sudden and violent liking to the boy. He'd squat cross-legged on his mat in the chop-room and try to win Chisholm over to Mohammedanism, while the boy was equally as argumentative for the Christian faith.

"They'd get into some curious tangles in their respective positiveness of the hereafter, the boy's contempt for the Serekai's heaven of dancing houris and sherbet fountains equaling the latter's scornful rejection of a heaven where nothing ever happened but perpetual sing-song. I began to see that ten thousand pounds developing into a tangible fact, and held aloof until the plot was ripe.

"That nearly brought catastrophe. You know the nigger's craze for white man's medicines? Well, the boy, unknown to me, gave Antagora a box of large liver-pills and a packet of salts. I discovered the mischief one night when a horde of savages poured into the compound, shaking spears and yelling, 'Poison! Treachery! White man has poisoned the Serekai!' Of course the old fool had swallowed the whole box of pills and the salts at one greedy gulp. That was an ugly night—not a wink of sleep—sitting in the chop-room, our guns ostentatiously ready, listening to the fearful groans that were emanating from the royal barge.

"But along towards morning they grew feebler and feebler, for all the world like the expiring breaths of a hamstrung elephant, until death or sleep claimed him. Fortu-

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nately for us it turned out to be sleep, out of which the Serekai awakened with a thoroughly purged system and a holy reverence for the boy's medicine and an earnest wish to show his friendship. Here's where I prompted Chisholm.

" 'Get a trade agreement from him. It means ten thousand pounds to us, and ten thousand pounds will clear up 'most any trouble.' The kid looked at me with an unspoken question. I reassured him: 'Oh, I know nothing; what you have done is up to your conscience, not mine; but there's very little trouble that can not be proved back to money.'

" 'Yes, Mr. Gladstone,' he meekly agreed. 'And what sort of agreement shall I make?'

" 'Offer thirty bags of salt—you may go to forty—annually, in half-yearly payments for sole trading-rights to Antagora and all the countries over which he is suzerain; the treaty to be operative on the first payment. Get it in your own name.'

" 'All right,' he called gaily, 'I'll get the treaty—bet you a bottle that I get it!'

" 'Don't be cocky; get after him; he's aboard his barge.'

"IN A WHILE I heard him calling me from the river-bank: 'Mr. Gladstone! Oh, Mr. Gladstone! Will you come down and witness the signatures?'

"But for politic reasons I didn't want my name to the paper, and I was wholly trusting the boy. I sent him two Sierra-Leonese clerks.

"You can bet your life we celebrated. But how were we to get the document to Macdonald & Goldenberg? The boy simply must take it; I would invalid him home, which, as his senior, I could do. But here I bumped up against his own particular code of morals; the young idiot objected—'It isn't playing the game with the Company.' It was his sister's 'It wouldn't be fair,' in another form. I put it to him whether the Company had played the game with him when they enticed him out with that Utopian advertisement of outdoor life.

" 'See here, kid, this life's a game of big one gobble up little one. You take that paper to Nigger Macdonald—or Goldenberg, if you miss Macdonald at Calabar. But be wily; Goldenberg is as slippery as an oiled python. Get your duds together and I'll go down and see about a canoe. I am invaliding you home.'

"I hired him a canoe, then returned to the house and broke a quart of champagne over the parting. I hated to see him go, but was buoyed by the emancipation he held out in that ten thousand pounds. Still, when the niggers shouldered his baggage and we fell in behind, it was a funeral procession.

" 'I've had a bully time,' he dropped into the silence. I could not trust myself to speak. Then we came to the bank, and the canoe was gone! A watchman said a clerk had told the paddlers it was hired for him and they had blithely paddled him away. Great Scott, but I was mad! Yet it never struck me that it was anything more than a homesick clerk taking his chance to get back to the Coast. I got another canoe for the kid, and stood there on the bank until it had disappeared behind the islands.

"Then I went to the store to see which clerk had played the skedaddle on me. It was Brimah, *one of the witnesses to the trading treaty;* and he was speeding ahead of Chisholm to—But that was the question—Whose spy was he? The A. G.'s or Nigger Macdonald's? Well, I had something to worry about, which was probably not a bad thing, for I missed the boy's laugh and his splash in his morning tub, and his voice in playful teasing of the bush-boy who valeted him. Still, uncertainty, when your life's happiness hangs upon the turn, can approach something like real torture.

VI

"A SLOW month dragged away, and not a line from the boy. In my anxiety I cursed his selfish thoughtlessness. Yet another month spun itself out—a month of agonizing gropings in the dark. Had the boy fallen into the A. G.'s clutches? Had Macdonald got him and played us false? I remembered the half-breed's resentment and his sneaking inquisitiveness about the boy. Then, too, the girl suddenly ceased writing. Her last letter said they were leaving Las Palmas for home, and it may have been that the voyage took a month out of her correspondence.

"I searched around to find such excuses to drive away the dreadful whisperings that were beginning to torture me. Said a demon of doubt: 'They played you for an easy one; they used and are done with you. You fool,

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what of the girl's deceitful entanglement of her skirt when you surprised her sentry-go? What of the boy's crime? He never took you into his confidence.' I tried to shake the demons off. And I had to fight the old whisky demon; but I did fight—God knows I fought! Oh, those were hard days up at N'Gombi for the negroes of the compound; floggings without end. And every moment found my eyes straining over the river for the canoe that would bring me tidings.

"But my mail-bag dropped back to its old condition of invoices and A. G. letters to which I had been accustomed before I had listened to the lying nothings of the girl and the boy. Their emptiness now stung me in the face; I funked opening them. And the demon was whispering, 'The boy has sold you! The boy has sold you! Fooled by a pair of talking eyes!' How I came to hate N'Gombi's solitudes! And how I raged at the youth sent up by the A. G. in the boy's place! At last the thing became unsupportable; I sent a runner to the A. G. with word that I was down with fever and wanted a trip down river to pick up, and got his permit. I was away at once on my quest of the boy.

"AT EGGA I came on the Agent General's yacht and he hailed my canoe and, pointing to the *N'Doni* loading rubber for the shipping port, said I could take passage by her and have a rest at Burutu while she was on the repairing-slip, and to come up with her when she was ready. Not a word about Chisholm; nor dared I ask, so I took the *N'Doni*. At Onitsha I heard he had passed on about three months before, bound for home. At Burutu I saw a stateroom passage for Liverpool made out in his name.

"If he were safe away, why, at least, didn't he drop me a line? Were the Company holding up his letters? I had to do something to relieve this torture of doubt. Don't think that it was any loss of my share in that ten thousand that unnerved me. Oh, no; that was long since forgotten in the doubt assailing my soul's banking on the friendship of Slip-of-a-Thing, Mama and the boy. It seemed to me that if I lost my faith there, I would lose all. I had to do something to settle the doubt one way or another; so I begged the Burutu launch on a plea of mahogany sighting. But it's very little mahogany I sighted that trip—none, in fact, excepting a submerged log that nearly sunk us in the Calabar stream as I headed full-speed for Nigger Macdonald's factory.

"I found things lively there. A barkentine stood outside the smoky bar lightering into the surf-boats that dumped the cargo on Macdonald's beach. It surprised me to find him doing so much trade. But on crossing his compound I picked up a cowrie. That set me thinking, and I crossed over to a pile of sacks and pinched them, feeling out more cowries. Now the cowrie is not used for currency down there—not below Iddah will you get a nigger to look at shells; he puts his faith in those two-inch brass rods as an exchange medium. So Macdonald was coming *up* the river.

"Where? I hurried up to his house, and, as I sit here, you could have heard my heart beat out the syllables of one reiterating sentence: 'The boy has sold me! The boy has sold me! The boy has sold me!' A negro's face framed in a window of the barter store shot familiarly into my vision. Suddenly I recognized it for my absconding clerk.

"Macdonald was sitting before his big ledger. He half leaped from his seat when I blustered in, and across his face swept fear. I went at him without civilities.

" 'So you've got the N'Gombi agreement! How did you pay Chisholm?'

" 'Why, my dear Gladstone, what's the matter? Sit down and have a drink. Boy, bring a glass.'

" 'Let the whisky stay; God knows I'm not thirsting for it now. Have you paid the boy that ten thousand?'

" 'Ah! then he has sold you, eh? Remember, I warned you of that young scamp!'

"Something snapped in my head. I dropped into a seat and tried to think. But my head just thrummed that one refrain, 'The boy has sold you! The boy has sold you!'

"Then came a whirlwind rage at the world. I leaped to my feet; I wanted to murder, and there was the kinky-haired brat of my old hate grown into a mannikin, with his cursed talk of 'using' me. My face must have been ugly, or it was his conscience; he started shrieking, 'Sabbo! Tom-Gin! Help! Help!' Two six-foot Ashantees rushed in. Lord! I've handled a score of niggers in a tighter place. I snatched up his little body by the arms and clubbed my way with it

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to the launch and soused him in the river as I sprang aboard and away.

"THE kick-back of these days—the slide down into the old viciousness—look at the whisky sales of the Burutu canteen for that part. I'm not excusing myself; if my story hasn't excused me, then I've told it mighty poorly. If I could make you see the suddenly blank, ugly, empty world into which I was dropped when my fool air-castle blew up—I tell you, to this day a jungle palm or mangrove swamp sinks me in a depression that is hell. But at last the *N'Doni* dipped the water again, and I took her to the bar to get the mail-sacks from the Liverpool boat.

"With the mail-sacks came your Harris, just as the boy had come before—kit galore, tinted cheeks, an enthusiasm that mocked me, romance-straining eyes, fever-belt and medicine-chest. Oh, I introduced him to Palm-Oil-Ruffianism in good style! Ask him—get him to tell you some of the undecorated stories with which I blanched his face as that palsied stern-wheeler skimmed through the silent, brooding, vaporous jungle, the nigger crew watching me like cats.

"One day I had been teasing him on his wonderful precautions against fever—according to latest medical theorizing—when he whipped out a toy gun, right in my face. I just reached out and took it from him—would have been glad if he *had* shot——

"HEAVEN knows how we reached Lokoja. I recall boarding the A. G.'s yacht and his frowning while he asked about the whisky at N'Gomi.

" 'Very low, sir,' says I. 'I was indenting.'

" 'Ah,' he smiles, 'that is unfortunate, for stocks are low all along the river and I am afraid we can not fill your indent this season.'

"So I showed the liquor badly enough to be put on the prohibition list, and that had never happened to me before.

"But he wasn't done. 'Gladstone,' says he, 'do you know that your station will soon be handling the Antagora trade?'

"I thought I saw the suspicion of a damnable smile about his mouth. But my head was busy with questions as to how my station could expect to handle the Antagora trade when I had myself seen Macdonald's preparations. I managed to bluff out something about it being good news.

" 'Yes,' says he, 'And wholly unexpected, eh, Gladstone?' he quizzed. 'It seems that your late assistant stole a march on us and obtained a treaty from Antagora. But what were *you* doing, Gladstone?'

"I hadn't a word. My heart was pounding and my blood racing. What if the boy were cleared after all? Then I blurted out about Macdonald's preparations.

" 'In that case,' he said, 'you will prevent by force, if necessary, any attempts on the part of the agents of Macdonald & Goldenberg to poach our trade, for the treaty they go on was faked in our London office. The treaty negotiated by your sub is in the Company's safe.'

"My temples were bursting. Lord! how I wanted to believe in the kid, and Slip-of-a-Thing and Mama! You, Marshall, can never know that want—you who have wife, mother, sisters, introductions—you who are in the swim of a life I see only outside the palings. But the A. G. was explaining:

" 'We've had a very narrow escape from serious competition. It seems that Macdonald got a line on the boy's going home with the treaty, and also knew something about a little matter of cash shortage which sent Chisholm out here. This news he wired to Goldenberg, with instructions to use it to club the treaty out of the boy. We have a "friend" with Goldenberg, who keeps us posted. Our people overreached them by sending their agent to intercept the boat. We have fooled Macdonald into an expense that will be a useful lesson.'

"Well you see, Marshall, it was simple enough; the kid saved his skin at my expense, and his women folk, having used me for a soft one, dropped me—forgot my existence. Well, I'm not kicking; I dreamed of white cities and acquaintances, but, after all, I am wedded to Africa—I count time by moons; my days are without hurry or appointments; I like the thrum of the village tom-toms better than the shriek of catgut; the croak of bullfrogs and hiss of crickets better than the clack-clack of the streets of respectability; man, woman nor child goes hungry in my world; and Slip-of-a-Thing has legacied me a joy in song-birds and orchids and skies—God, what dreams she gave me!"

He had thrown out his philosophy as one who argues himself into agreement with the inevitable; but at the end his bravado fell away pitifully; his head sagged down on

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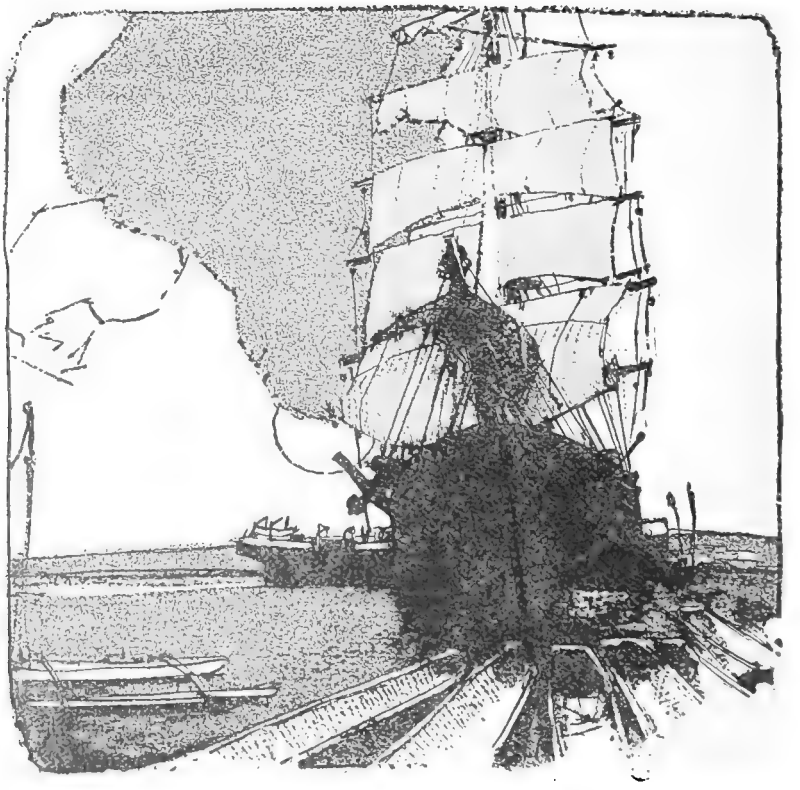
his chin; his right hand clawed the littered mail, his fingers closing on the papers.

Marshall reached over and worried a letter free of his fingers, smoothed it out and pushed it across the table under the other's eyes. Gladstone snatched it up, starting, then staring wildly.

"Good God, it's hers! It's Slip-of-a-Thing's writing!"

He read as a starving man devours food. All the pretended satisfaction with barbarism fell from him like a thrown-off cloak. He went back again, reading slowly, like one who reads seldom, his lips forming the words. Suddenly he threw up his head and thrust out his hands, ejaculating:

"Oh—my—God! I thought—oh, I'm going home—sick leave—home!"



On the WATER-FRONT

by H. D. Couzens

THERE were once two men in Honolulu who helped make local history; not with deliberate intention, but as a by-product of their profession. Their record, during a sojourn of four or five years, is on file only in the dry, undetailed entries of old police blotters and legal reports of court proceedings. As they abhorred publicity and were either close-mouthed or misleading about their own affairs, the history of their exploits in the Island City will never come to light save in possible fragmentary bits like the present chronicle, but it would make interesting reading. It would clear up many a dark mystery of the water-front and account for disappearances of men who might have tarried awhile and written large their

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marks upon the annals of the Pacific, which remain unexplained to this day. Incidentally, it might also account for more than one bloody mutiny on the high seas recorded in the shipping records with no recognition whatever of these two gentlemen.

Their names were Rook and Davis, and their occupation—according to Mr. Davis a most humane one—was to provide employment for all able-bodied seamen, whether they needed it or not. They kept a sailor's boarding-house near the water-front and, to their credit, were energetic and thrifty. If a sailor had money left he might abide in peace and enjoy his simple comforts at a slight advance over the prevailing rates, but when it was gone he was convinced in various ways that man must live by the sweat of his brow and it was time to be up and doing. Their audacity and resourcefulness were unbounded. It is a matter of record that on one occasion, when seamen were scarce, they removed two convicts, working on the road in prison garb, from under the eye of their overseer, hurriedly shipped them as able-bodied seamen, collected the head-money and sent them on their way rejoicing.

Larry Davis, junior partner merely for the sake of euphony in the firm name, was a tall, suave gentleman, huge in bulk, but mild, even kindly of speech. His gentle, persuasive voice flowed like a peaceful valley stream. He was very, very slow to anger. Argument and persuasion were his weapons, and between the club and the silken thread he chose the thread, winding it delicately, imperceptibly about his prospective clients till, ere they were aware, he held them bound and helpless. It was said that he knew more Admiralty law than any man in the Pacific, and the knowledge helped him over many rough places in his chosen profession. His glance was bold and dominating, capable of hardening at times to a merciless glare, but the dominating boldness was the merest sham, for, huge and powerful of frame as he was, Mr. Davis concealed beneath his rugged exterior a wide streak of "yellow."

His partner, Frank Rook, was small, wiry and silent, with a cold eye and a grim, thin-lipped mouth. What little speech he used was forceful and aggressive, full of strong oaths. To the doubting tar who found the honeyed arguments of his partner unconvincing came Mr. Rook with arguments of his own, which, though they lacked finesse, were of a peremptory nature that usually ended all debate. Thus equipped, or, we might say, gifted, the partners were armed against most emergencies, and accordingly they prospered. Masters of short-handed vessels found them infallible; but if threats could slay, many a shaft, feathered with curses breathed huskily in a grimy forecastle, would have found its way to the calloused hearts of the two shipping-masters.

ONE day there came dancing into Honolulu Harbor a saucy little schooner, handled with such skill as to command the admiration of the brown old pilot on the pilot-house veranda. "She's a trader from down Samoa way, I'll bet a cigar," said he; "them fellows can sail like ——!" The schooner rounded to, prettily, with a purring of blocks as the sails settled, shot alongside a wharf and was made fast. Half an hour later her captain, a half-caste Samoan; her crew, four Tonga boys; and a white man, flocked into the Last Chance Saloon, ranged thirstily up to the bar and called for drinks. The white man looked genially around at the few loungers. "Gentlemen," said he, "step up! Have one on your Uncle Jerry, just from Samoa!"

At a table in a far corner the partners, Rook and Davis, gloomed in utter disgust. Never before had they felt so keenly the sting of failure and the blow to professional pride, for the harbor was fairly congested with ships and there was not a man to be had. Head-money had doubled and trebled, and still they found themselves impotent and unable to supply the demand. Mr. Rook had bitterly suggested going forth among the citizens with a piece of lead pipe as a last resort, when the affable stranger issued his invitation. Instantly they pricked up their ears like hounds who have scented their quarry. Rook stepped to the bar with alacrity; Davis followed more slowly. The only other lounger who accepted was a Portuguese with rings in his ears.

"See here, friend," said Davis; "I'll take a drink with you on one condition; that is, you'll take one with me afterward."

"No fear!" said the other; "God knows I'm dry enough. Captain Jimmie here has queer notions for a Kanaka; won't sail that old schooner of his with any drink aboard.

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Consequence is we've been perishing with thirst the whole voyage."

Davis, contrary to the prevailing fashion, poured a modest drink, and his keen eyes took instant note of the handful of gold from which the stranger paid his score. The latter was friendly and talkative, a habit of men who have lived much among the brown people of the South Seas, and Davis quietly took stock of him as he talked lightly the gossip of ships and trading-stations. He was roughly clad in a checked shirt and brown *dungarees*. A greasy bandanna encircled his neck, and on his head was a wide-brimmed hat made of the leaves of the pandanus palm, surmounted by a dingy *puggaree*. His face and neck were burned deep by tropic suns, his eyes were red and watery and his nose seamed and reddened by drink. He had, withal, a rakish, quizzical way about him that bespoke an absence of guile, and something of the lost-dog friendliness toward mankind in general. He was obviously British, and to the speculative eye of Davis presented the aspect of the remittance-man gone to seed.

Davis signaled to the proprietor of the saloon who placed more drink on the bar. "Friend," said he, "I understand you're from Samoa?"

"Wrong!" said the stranger. "I'm from any old place, from the Marquesas to the Pelews. I'm Jerry Bradshaw, gentleman, of the South Seas. Any old beach is home to me."

"My name's Davis. This is my partner, Mr. Rook—Mr. Bradshaw. Glad to know you. Going to stop long in Honolulu?"

"My word, no! I'm going *home!* Gentlemen, I've knocked about Polynesia for fifteen years. I've gone blackbirding for the plantations—a beastly business—when it was either that or starve. I've held down lonely trading-stations and nearly gone off my chump from homesickness, and I've hit the beach, *hard*, when the Kanakas were my only friends—the missionaries have no use for a white man down on his luck—and I've picked up pearls, from Thursday to the Paumotus. Fifteen years! And now I'm going home! Barman, give us another drink!"

DAVIS looked at his partner and solemnly lowered his right eyelid. The Samoan captain, who had business with the Shipping Commissioner, left with his crew of Tonga boys. Rook looked hungrily after them as they filed out, but Davis shook his head the fraction of an inch. "Talofa, Jimmie!" Bradshaw called to the departing captain; "see you aboard tonight!" and again Davis looked at his partner and winked.

"I suppose, Mr. Bradshaw," said Davis; "you're going home rich and respected; or is it the prodigal and the fatted calf?"

"Rot!" said Bradshaw; "I'm going home because I'm homesick. I've no money to speak of, but I've something else and can throw my brother's blasted remittance in his face! I've done with his charity. See here, Mr. Davis!"

He spoke a trifle excitedly, but with the lost-dog attitude uppermost. His late forced abstinence on the high seas had rendered him susceptible, perhaps, and the drinks were telling. He took from his pocket a knotted blue handkerchief and slowly and fumblingly untied it. The knots undone, he gingerly opened the handkerchief and showed, glowing softly in the center, a double handful of beautiful pearls. "There!" said he. "The result of fifteen years' knocking about! Did you ever see anything finer than that?"

Davis fingered some of the pearls, idly, and tossed them back in the handkerchief. "Oh, I don't know," said he indifferently; "I'm no judge of them things. I suppose they're worth a lot of money, though."

Just then his glance rested on his partner's face. Mr. Rook's small, shifty eyes were ablaze with cupidity, his fists clenched, his face suffused, and he was breathing hard. "Mr. Bradshaw," said Davis, "come over to the table and sit down; bring us a drink, Gus!"

As Bradshaw preceded him he leaned toward his partner. "Duck!" said he, in a forcible whisper. Rook bit his thin lip and scowled. "Duck, —— you!" Davis's voice held an unmistakable menace. It was an unwritten clause in the code of partnership; each one must give way while the talents of his partner were operative, and presently Rook slunk, like a shadow, through the door.

"Mr. Bradshaw," said Davis, as he seated himself, "you better put them things away. We're all honest men about here, but somebody might lift them off you if some of the water-front scum got wind of 'em. Better stick 'em away in the bank

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while you're here." He looked at his watch. "It's closed for the day now, but you can attend to it the first thing in the morning; I'll give you a letter to them myself; meantime, I suppose you'd like to see something of Honolulu?" His tone was merely that of polite inquiry.

"I would, old chap. Of course I don't know the ropes. I'm like a fish out of water. But I must get trimmed up a bit and put on some decent clothes. I look like a forecastle hand."

Mr. Davis waved his hand, largely. "Clothes," said he, "don't make the man. It's what's *inside* the clothes that counts with *me*. Now *I* can see, Mr. Bradshaw, with half an eye, that you're a man and a gentleman. So let's forget the clothes for a while and take a ride out to the Beach. There's a hack just outside. It'll brace you up, old man. Come along!"

Bradshaw was growing drowsy. "All right, old cock!" said he, sleepily; "lead on Mac—hic—MacDuff!" He followed Davis to the waiting hack, whose driver was the Portuguese of the earrings. "Drive to Waikiki Beach, José!" said Davis.

IT WAS late at night when the hack returned. As it drew up before the Last Chance Saloon another followed and halted immediately in the rear. Out of the second vehicle glided the agile form of Mr. Frank Rook. He stole swiftly to the side of the first hack. Within, the inert form of Jerry Bradshaw snored in drunken slumber, his head on Davis's shoulder.

"Is that you, Frank?" said Davis guardedly. "I'm looking for you. Where have you been?"

"Piping you off the whole afternoon," said Rook, with a crooked grin. "Couldn't trust you alone with them pearls, Larry!"

"Humph! Well, they're safe enough. It was *too* easy! Get aboard, ye mistrustful wharf-rat! José, drive down to the wharf!"

The hack proceeded cautiously by way of Alakea Street, and halted in the deep shadow cast by the mantling bows of a great English bark. Davis descended. The head and shoulders of a watchman, leaning over the rail, could be seen silhouetted against the sky. Davis hailed cautiously, and on being answered boarded the vessel by the gangway. Presently he returned, followed by men who gently lifted the supine form of Jerry Bradshaw and with it disappeared into the upper obscurity.

Davis, by the light of one of the carriage-lamps, carefully counted a jingling handful of gold and silver coin and placed it tenderly in an inner pocket.

"There," said he, as they drove off; "that's a quick turn, Frank, and all done legal and proper. None of your strong-arm game about it; nothing that no one can prove, and the ship sails at daybreak. Three months' advance, too, my boy! Jerry Bradshaw was homesick," he broke into a prolonged chuckle; "he wanted to go home. Well, he's on his way!"

II

THE Last Chance Saloon was the unofficial headquarters of the partners. The proprietor, a pock-marked German, found the arrangement to his profit. A slight disturbance, quickly suppressed, in a water-front saloon, is one thing, and easily explained away. The same occurrence in a sailor's boarding-house is quite another matter for reasons that are obvious. Quiet and orderly seamen who wished a berth found it by way of the boarding-house, while reluctant recruits were shipped by way of the saloon.

Davis leaned nonchalantly on the bar, conversing with the proprietor. The English bark was now three days out at sea, bound for Liverpool. The money had been divided by the usual process, which, being characteristic of the business dealings of the partners, is worth describing. Davis emptied the contents of his pockets in a heap, turning the pockets inside out as a matter of good faith. This was insisted on by his partner.

After certain expense money was withdrawn, each drew in turn a coin of equal value from the heap till it was gone, scrupulously making the exact change, down to the last nickel. This was their daily habit of casting up accounts, as the firm kept no books whatever, and the advantages of the system are, of course, perfectly apparent. Money for current expenses was kept in a small safe in a back room, and again, as a matter of good faith, Davis alone knew the combination while Rook carried the key. In this safe lay the handkerchief of pearls, still undivided, as their individual value

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was unknown, awaiting a favorable opportunity for disposal.

Davis had just handed the proprietor a sum of money and was accepting a drink "on the house" when the door swung open suddenly and a man entered. Davis glanced at him, idly at first, then with intense surprise; then an expression of pleasure, almost genuine, illumined his features:

"Why—why, old man, I'm glad to see you! Where did you drop from? I'm certainly surprised——"

"Surprised!" cried Jerry Bradshaw, his voice shaking with rage. "Surprised , are you? Why, you —— crimp, you ought to be! You shanghaied me aboard that bark and I'm going to bash in your ugly mug for it!"

Davis paled a trifle and some of the drink in his hand spilled over. Nevertheless his voice was stern and reproachful. "Now, now, brother! We don't shanghai any one. It isn't legal. Mr. Rook and me are in a legitimate business. You was a trifle under the weather, as the fellow says, the last time I met you, and you don't remember."

"I know you shanghaied me, and robbed me, too," said Bradshaw; "and I'm going to give you the licking of your life!" He advanced threateningly. A small, thin-lipped man who had been hidden behind a newspaper at a table in the corner rose and stood poised lightly and stealthily, like a cat.

Bradshaw looked over his shoulder swiftly, and Davis, following with his eyes, saw standing at the door a huge native policeman, smiling blandly and swinging his club. The small man also saw this unwelcome apparition and subsided behind his paper. It was a time for quickness of thought, and the gifted Davis rose to the emergency. "Just a second, Jerry," said he; "then you may strike me if you like. I'll not resist. You're in wrong. You're doing me dirt, but listen!"

"Bosh!" said Bradshaw; "that's bally rot! Robbing me was bad enough, but the other—well, this officer has agreed to stand by and see fair play. He won't interfere till afterward. Now stand up like a man and take what you deserve!"

"Jerry," said Davis sadly, "this is fierce! You come here and force your friendship on an honest man, then force your property on him for safe-keeping, stumble off somewhere in the dark and get lost, and then come back at your friends with assault, battery and libel. All right! I'm through with you! Come over and get your —— pearls that I kept for you in my safe, like you asked me to, and then, if you still want it, I'll take a punch at you, just for luck."

Bradshaw looked slightly bewildered. There was a wounded and indignant quality in Davis's voice that was most convincing. "Hum!" said he, "so you've kept the pearls —for me—have you?"

"Sure!" said Davis. "Who else? You handed 'em to me right at this bar, asking me to put them in my safe while you went down to the wharf to see your friend, Captain Jimmie Luka. You was under the weather, as I say—very much so. What happened then I don't know, because I haven't clapped eyes on you since you walked out of that door. Most likely you stumbled aboard the wrong ship and, being short-handed, they held you up, or else one of these crimps bumped you off. Anyway, all this rough talk to me is out of place, and if it's the same to you we'll go get the pearls and call it quits—and mighty ungrateful of you I call it, Mr. Bradshaw!"

Bradshaw looked still more confused. As a matter of fact he was far from clear as to what had actually taken place, and had drawn conclusions from the most logical hypotheses, and Mr. Davis was very dignified in his indignation. "All right," said he, "you produce the pearls and perhaps I'll believe you. This officer will go with us."

THE policeman had been eying Davis with a smile of cynical amusement, for it was not the first time he had come in contact with the partners. The smile was not lost on Davis, and as the officer turned to Bradshaw and spoke in a low tone he walked over to the table where his partner sat tensely listening behind the newspaper. "Here, Frank, dig up that key; quick!" said he in a sharp undertone.

"What key?"

"The key to the safe!"

"Not on your life!" said Rook grimly. "Not in a thousand years!"

"Frank!" said Davis desperately; "do you see that cop? It's Charlie Kupihi, and he's on to us from top to bottom! This means the Reef for us both unless you do as I say. There's no time for argument. I know what I'm doing and I'll get this lime-

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juicer yet. Do you hear? Hand over that key! I tell you I'll make good, you —— parsimonious pirate!"

Rook took the flat key from an inner pocket, hesitated, scowled ferociously at his partner, and with unfeigned reluctance passed it over.

"Now," said Davis hurriedly, "you stick right here! You'll be in on the next move!"

In spite of this injunction Rook tossed aside his paper as the others departed, turned up his collar, pulled his hat over his eyes and stole out. He was disturbed at the course events were taking, his hands clenched and his muscles flexed with the desire for strong, decisive action. He felt his own impotence keenly. Stationed at a window he remained an interested witness to what transpired within the boarding-house. Davis at once produced the handkerchief of pearls.

"There," said he politely, "is your personal property. Kindly look it over, Mr. Bradshaw. I think you will find it all right."

While Bradshaw and the officer took stock of the pearls he took from the safe the handful of gold coin that was to pay expenses for the current month. He emptied it from the bag that contained it into his palm. "How are you fixed for money, Bradshaw?" he asked. "Broke?"

"Absolutely! I haven't a sou-markee!"

"Well, I don't carry much money on hand as a rule, but here's what I've got. It will hold you till you can get rid of a pearl or two and then you can pay me back. Here, you count it!" He held out the handful of gold.

Bradshaw drew back. "Oh, here now, I say, old man! I can't let you do that. I must say you're damnably decent after all. Let me have a quid or so, as I'm stony-broke, and to-morrow——"

"Not a bit of it. Nothing doing!" Davis reached forward and quickly slipped the gold into the pocket of Bradshaw's shirt, to the utter horror of Rook, who gnashed his teeth in the background. "I won't need it to-night and I want to square things right with you. You wronged me, of course——"

"Oh, here! I say, none of that! Mr. Davis, I apologize and here's my hand on it. By gad, sir, I'm your debtor, and to-morrow——"

"Not another word!" said Davis. He locked the safe and they strolled into the street. The crucial moment had arrived, and the next few seconds would tell whether his judgment was at fault. The cynical policeman was an incubus. If Bradshaw, tired and worn, sought rest and sleep, all was lost. If, grateful, over-trusting, thirsty, perhaps——

"Now, Bradshaw," said Davis, "I guess you owe Charlie, the cop here, a drink, and I must say I'm curious. You say you were shanghaied aboard a bark, and yet here you are——"

"Come with me," said Bradshaw; "we'll have a drink or two and I'll tell you the yarn."

And Davis drew a breath of relief.

MR. ROOK was ensconced behind his paper in the corner as before; the policeman refreshed himself at the rear door and left to patrol his beat. Bradshaw was humble and full of apologies that Davis waved aside in a large, deprecating way. "Cut it out, friend," said he; "and tell me how the devil you came here. Honest, man, I can't get it through my head that you ain't a ghost. Did they stop the ship and land you at Waikiki? It looks like a fairy-tale."

Bradshaw laughed. "No fairy-tale to me, I assure you. Quite the reverse—quite! In fact the only fairy-tale to me is that I'm not on the beach a blooming beggar. You see, old chap, I've a fairly hard head and when I woke on that ship my senses were clear. A man was kicking me—the mate, I suppose it was; and I hauled off and jolly well smashed him. I hadn't the least idea where I was, and when I went on deck—my word! I hadn't a surmise of what had happened—that came to me later; but I'd been kicked and that ship was no place for me, so I dove over the rail. I knew they wouldn't put about for me."

The upshot of the tale was that Bradshaw, who was as amphibious as a Kanaka, had succeeded, after a two-hour swim, in reaching the rather bleak and inhospitable beach near Mokapu Point, on the windward side of Oahu; some natives had given him *poi* and fish, and after a brief rest he had walked the long, dreary miles over the frowning Pali to Honolulu, nursing his vengeance on the way.

Davis walked to the door and glanced out. Big Charlie Kupihi was not in sight. He whistled and a hack half a block away

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was set in motion by its Jehu, a Portuguese with rings in his ears, and stopped before the door. Davis walked back toward the bar. On his way he shot one keen glance toward the man at the table in the corner.

"You've certainly had hard lines, Jerry," said he. "And now you'd better come uptown and get something to eat. I've just called a hack. Before we go we'll take one more drink to your good fortune." He held beneath the last two fingers of his huge left hand a small glass vial. As he spoke he lifted the other's glass with the same hand as though mildly urging it on him. "Here's luck!" said he, raising his own glass and touching that of the adventurer.

Bradshaw was sober—quite sober. He was sure of that. Perhaps his hold of the bar was firmer than necessary—also, the bland, moon face before him was growing blurred. He heard Davis speak, but the words were indistinct and seemed to come from a long way off.

"Wha's this?" said he thickly. "Mus' be drunk!"

The small man in the corner stole forward and dropped on all fours behind him. The proprietor of the saloon nonchalantly polished glasses. "No, no!" said Davis, placing his hand on Bradshaw's shoulder. "You're all right, man. Brace up!" As he spoke he shoved violently forward and Bradshaw fell backward over the crouching form of Rook, his head striking the floor with a bang. In an instant Rook was kneeling on his chest, his hands at his throat.

"That will do, Frank," said Davis. "He's down and out. Let be!"

"Not yet," said Rook, and thrusting his hand into the pocket of the prostrate Bradshaw he brought forth a knotted handkerchief and a handful of gold coin. "Down to the wharf, José," said Davis, as they lifted the inert form into the hack.

III

A WEEK later the partners sat at the little round table in the corner of the Last Chance Saloon in conference. Mr. Davis was speaking, and he held in the hollow of his hand a beautiful gray, smoky pearl, almost as large as a Hamburg grape. He smiled a bland, satisfied smile. "Frank," said he, "as long as you insisted that we divide these things up, and we've done it, I want to know if you're satisfied?"

"Sure," grinned Rook. "Satisfied, and a lot safer. There's too much sleight-of-hand about you and I feel better with my share in my inside pocket."

"All right," said Davis; "now that you're satisfied I may as well tell you, since you were so greedy about wanting the nice, white, shiny ones, that this black pearl, as they call it, is worth more than all of your share put together. Hold on! Keep your shirt on! It's your own fault. Now, another thing. We're going to quit this business for a while and take a little trip to Seattle or Frisco for the good of our health. There's a nigger in the wood-pile about this Bradshaw business."

"Huh! The man's safe enough by now. Didn't we ship him in the *Belle of Newcastle*, bound for Australia? There'll be no swimming ashore this time. The guy's only a beach-comber, and there can't be any come-back."

"Perhaps not; here's a note I got this morning. Jerry Bradshaw's on the way to Sydney, but I'm for Frisco just the same."

He tossed on the table a paper containing a brief scrawl:

> Do you know anything of a man called Jerry Bradshaw?

It was signed by the Assistant District Attorney, a man well known to the partners through certain Court proceedings. Rook set his grim lips. "Well, what the ——?" he snarled; "what do we know? We can deny everything, can't we?"

"Oh, yes," said Davis wearily; "of course. But there's Charlie Kupihi, you'll remember, and there's our stainless record on the police blotter. And as for this man being a beach-comber—he had the pearls all the same—a good-sized fortune. Me, I'm for Frisco on the *Sonoma* to-morrow. Stay here if you like, you thick-headed ruffian. Honest, you make me tired!"

While this conversation went forward the proprietor of the saloon had ceased polishing the bar and was talking with three men who had quietly entered. Suddenly he called: "Oh, Davis!" and beckoned. Davis turned and confronted the Assistant District Attorney, Charlie Kupihi, the night patrolman, and a severe, ascetic man, with heavy gold-rimmed eye-glasses. "Davis," said the attorney, without preliminaries, "what do you know about this man Bradshaw? Better speak up and tell!"

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"Hum!" said Davis; "me and Frank was just wondering who you meant. Bradshaw —let me see! I knew a man in Portland once by that name, but his first name wasn't Jerry. Don't believe I can place him." He was studying, with some anxiety, the smiling face of the policeman.

"Now see here, Davis! You have sailed pretty close to the wind in your business and I advise you to be careful. This gentleman is Mr. Romney, an attorney from Melbourne, and he is interested in finding this man. It is known that he sailed from Apia for Honolulu in a small schooner and was lost track of here. This officer says he helped a man answering his description out of a difficulty here, and, knowing your methods, I can make a guess at the rest of it—enough to make a case against you, anyway. You'd better tell what you know."

"Charlie," said Davis, "was that man's name Bradshaw? Can you swear to it?"

The officer looked doubtful. The native Hawaiian is weak on foreign names containing a sibilant. "Bladisaw—Belakisala—something like that."

"There you are, Mr. Owens; you see how it is. Now it's a fact that I *helped* a man out of some shanghai trouble here a week or so ago, but whether he was Bradshaw or Blakeslee or Blaisdell I don't know. He was only a bum of a beach-comber, and the thing had escaped my memory. That's all I know."

"Beach-comber!" cried Mr. Romney, in a high, English voice. "If this is the man I want, my friend, he is no beach-comber! He is a viscount and a peer of England! A younger son to whom the title has fallen."

Mr. Owens looked his disapproval at this rash disclosure. As for Davis, he was thunderstruck, and for once his natural *sang-froid* deserted him and he stood agape. Jerry Bradshaw a viscount! Truly he and his partner had been angling in deep waters, and this was no ordinary police court affair. Then he saw an advantage. "Mr. Owens, I may be wrong; perhaps this fellow Charlie tells about was your man. Whatever became of him I don't know, but I'll try and find out and tell you if you'll pass your word you won't interfere with me and Frank. Seems to me his name *was* Bradshaw. I can certainly find out and tell you."

Owens started to speak, but Mr. Romney interrupted. "Good!" said he. "Do the best you can, my man. I may say, Mr. Owens, that my clients would deplore any idea of prosecution or a stir of any kind providing their man is found safe and well. I may add that there has been a reward offered for some time in the Colonial papers, of two hundred pounds. I see no reason why, if this man furnishes correct information, it should not be paid to him."

THIS time Owens's face wore a look of disgust and he shrugged his shoulders. Davis, thinking of the *Sonoma* sailing on the morrow, inwardly exulted. "All right, and thank you kindly, sir. Mr. Rook and me will look this matter up and make a full report the day after to-morrow."

"The —— we will!" It was the voice of Mr. Rook, angry and indignant. "See here, Mr. Owens, you've heard the gentleman's offer. Do you stand by it? Will you guarantee you won't use the Shipping Laws against us if we deliver the goods?" Owens nodded reluctantly. "All right. We shipped this man Bradshaw on the *Belle of Newcastle*, bound for Sydney. Two hundred pounds is a thousand dollars, and we need the money! Your man is eight days out on the way to Australia!"

"He is, eh?" It was a new voice—the voice of a man who had been for a brief moment peering through a crack in the swinging door. He launched himself bodily into the saloon like a whirlwind. Owens, Romney and the policeman were thrust aside as he leaped; there was the stinging smack of a blow which landed flush on the jaw of Davis, and that gentleman fell like an ox; a second, that caught Rook in the eye, and he, too, went down. He arose instantly, ready for battle, but the advantage was against him; another blow crashed into his face and again he went down.

As Davis fell a small object was released from his hand and went rolling like a marble across the floor. The newcomer saw it and, as Rook went down for the second time, pounced upon it. "My pearl, by gad! Where's the rest? Stand up here, you hulking crooks, and empty your pockets!" He was breathing deeply and his face was flushed to a dark red. Davis scrambled dazedly to his feet. Rook, the blood spreading on his face, craftily rolled toward the door, where he was stopped and jerked upright by the policeman. With his free hand

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the officer clutched the newcomer's arm in a grip of iron.

Owens stepped forward, angrily. "Who the devil may *you* be?" said he. "And what do you mean by this?"

"Gentlemen, my name's Bradshaw—Jerry Bradshaw. I heard one of these —— crimps use it, and as they've robbed and shanghaied me twice and I had a score to settle I may have been a little violent. It was worth it, I assure you."

"Davis," said Owens sharply, "is this true?" Davis nodded, weakly. "Yes," said he sullenly. "He's your man, all right."

Bradshaw looked astonished. "It seems that I'm *somebody's* man. I say, what's the racket? *I* only want my pearls."

Romney stepped forward. He was polishing his glasses furiously and seemed very much flustered at all this disturbance. "Bradshaw—I should say, my lord—you must remember me—Romney. I've had charge of your remittances for fifteen years. Your brother is dead, I am sorry to have to tell you, and you have come into the title."

"The deuce you say!"

"Yes, sir! And believe me I am sorry indeed to see you have been in difficulties. I may safely say, however, that your troubles are over now, and I would suggest that we go uptown to an hotel—and a tailor's, my lord!"

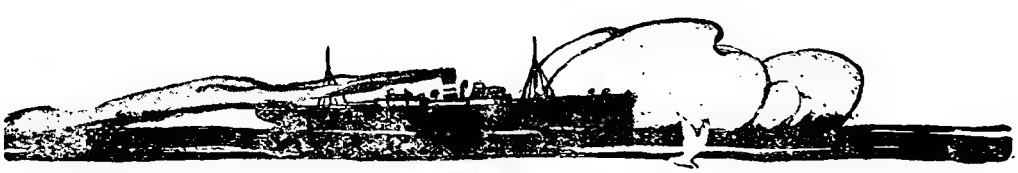
"Just a minute," said Bradshaw. "I'm not used to the 'my lord' yet, Romney, and first I want those pearls. I've been a remittance man and hit the beach for fifteen years. I came here on my way home and I had these pearls I'd sweat and toiled for for years, and these thieves stole them. This last ship they shanghaied me on was a terror, and I owe them something for that. We got becalmed off Kauai and stood off and on for four days before I had a chance to swim ashore, and I worked my way back from Kauai superintending a cargo of pigs on the steamer *Mikihala*."

Kupihi looked at Owens, and the latter nodded. The officer skilfully located the pearls on the persons of Rook and Davis and handed them over to their rightful owner. Davis submitted meekly, but not so the truculent Rook. He made a last desperate stand. "All right," said he; "take the —— things! You promised not to prosecute; and don't forget the reward. You guaranteed that, Owens!"

Charlie Kupihi yelped with laughter. The proprietor hastily dropped a glass and stooped down behind the bar. Owens smiled, and even the crestfallen face of Larry Davis twisted into a wry grin as he looked in astonishment at his partner.

Only the sedate Mr. Romney maintained his gravity and said with dignity: "You haven't earned it. You said my client was on the way to Australia. His presence here, so opportunely, I may say, disproves your statement. Therefore no reward is due you."

"You fellows," said Owens as he surveyed Rook's black eye and bloody face and his partner's dented hat and clothes covered with sawdust and dirt,—"you fellows have had part of the kind of reward you needed. I only agreed, however, not to prosecute you under the Shipping Laws. Theft is another matter, and I'll see personally that you get the balance of your reward in court. Charlie, take these men in charge!"



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The COIN OF FORTUNE

by Frances R. Sterrett

I DO NOT remember who it was who asked to see the collection. Perhaps it was Count de Viarde, perhaps it was Oliver Wyman or Mrs. Elbert Sears.

"It isn't really a collection," Adele Day spoke apologetically and looked from one to another of her guests as though to explain that they must not expect too much. "You remember that my uncle left his real collection, the famous coins, the complete coinage of the United States, of Greece and of Rome, to the museum. What he left to me was what he called the coins of sentiment—about two dozen gold, silver and copper pieces, each one connected with a story or legend. They are very interesting, especially to me, but they don't form much of a collection."

"There are single coins that are far more interesting to the average person than a dozen great collections," observed Wyman idly. "I warn you, if a certain Napoleon five-franc piece is among your coins of sentiment, that I will appropriate it at once!"

She stopped on her way across the room to the inlaid box that held her legacy to question, "Why?"

He went to help her, although the box was neither large nor heavy, for he always wanted to help her and be near her. He had been in Japan on important business for a large manufacturing corporation for a year, and just to be with her again made his pulses throb.

"As the niece of the greatest numismatist in the country, you should know," he rebuked sternly. "You may or may not have heard," he went on in the manner of a professor instructing his class, "that the great Napoleon Bonaparte increased the coinage of his country by some millions of five-franc pieces and, as the people were prejudiced against his bulky cart-wheels, he made them popular in true Napoleonic fashion. He announced to the people of France that in one of the new coins was a note, folded to almost infinitesimal size, but signed by the great Napoleon and promising to pay the finder five million francs. That, my friends, is about one million dollars in good American money!

"You can imagine the demand there was for the new five-franc pieces when the news was made public. Everybody in France asked for the new coins—they would take

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no others; and many of the pieces were cut open and mutilated in the hope of finding the note that meant a fortune. But no one discovered it—no one has ever discovered it. The promissory note has never been presented to the French Government. It is still at large, holding its secret of a great fortune. Any one may have it. It may be in your pocket this very moment!"

Involuntarily hands went to pockets and were promptly withdrawn with shame-faced grins.

"What a ridiculous fairy-story!" laughed Mrs. Sears.

"Pardon, madame. It is no fairy-story. Every child in France knows of the coin of fortune and hopes to find it." The Count spoke impulsively, but he was a Frenchman and should know about French children, so when Mrs. Sears laughed again it was indulgently.

"There was much of the child about your great Napoleon," she said.

De Viarde interrupted her: "Pardon again, madame. Not *my* Napoleon! The De Viardes have never been Republicans nor Bonapartists. We are of the old régime."

He drew himself up as he spoke, and there was a dignity in his slim body and the high carriage of his head that made Mrs. Sears murmur some vague words of apology before she turned to Miss Day:

"Where are these 'coins of sentiment'?"

Wyman brought the box and placed it on the table with a flourish. There were about half a dozen people in the long drawing-room. There was Mrs. Elbert Sears, the pretty wife of a man who gave his brain to Wall Street and his heart to first editions—and as this story does not concern either, he will play no part in it. Mrs. Sears had always two or three men at her elbow. This afternoon they were George Root and Count Jules de Viarde, the latter a typical *boulevardier* with his smart clothes, blond beard, that to American eyes sadly needed trimming, and the soft brown eyes which he used with such effect when he was talking to a woman. His hands were slim and white and were generally in motion in the vivacious Continental fashion.

He had the appearance of a gentle poet whose thoughts were very far from the bustle of present-day life, but he had come to the United States to take part in an international aeronautic meet and was known in Paris as a daring and fearless man in his dealings with more things than aeroplanes. Mrs. Sears had met him on the *Mauretania* and had been impressed by his eyes, his title and his aeronautic record and had brought him this evening to see Adele Day—poor Adele, whose wealthy uncle had died a year before and left his fortune to his college and the museum that had been his diversion and pride.

His legacy to Adele consisted of the "coins of sentiment" and the old Day home where they had lived together and which she was not to dispose of under any consideration. Adele had a small fortune left her by her father, but it was nothing in comparison with the millions her uncle could have willed her, and her friends were indignant at what they called Dr. Day's injustice. They had begged her to break the will and they thought her mad when she refused. "Uncle Jim knew what he was about, or thought he did," was all she said, "and it was his money. He had the right to leave it where he pleased."

Mrs. Sears thought of this as she glanced at the box of olivewood, inlaid with mother-of-pearl and silver wire, and she spoke more quickly than usual. "If I were you, Adele, I would sell these coins, if they are worth anything."

"Sell them!" Adele looked at her in surprise. "You have no idea how much Uncle Jim thought of them!"

"The very reason I would sell them!" insisted Mrs. Sears, somewhat spitefully. "He didn't show so much thought for your future that you should consider his likes and dislikes!"

A flush of annoyance crept into Miss Day's cheeks. Wyman saw it and, like a true knight, rushed to the rescue.

"Sell them?" he repeated. "Certainly! We will do it at once, and I will be the auctioneer!" He lifted the box and carried it to the other end of the room, waving them aside. "What do I see?" He clasped his hands as though the contents of the box filled him with wonder and admiration. "Ah! The widow's mite! A coin, ladies and gentleman, that should make a special appeal to you. It is possible you are not familiar with it? What am I offered?"

He waved the tiny coin before them, but there were no bids and he shook his head sadly as he returned it to its place. "Perhaps royalty will appeal to you more. What

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do you say to a nice bawbee?" insinuatingly. "A small bit of copper, it is true, but reeking with sentiment, for it was minted in honor of the birth of Mary of Scotland, the Queen of Beauty by the popular vote of France, Scotland and England. Pooh! You are a stingy pack! But what is this?" He started back dramatically and stared wildly at the box. "A French coin! A five-franc piece!" he hissed. "And what am I offered for it?"

He held the coin above his head as they pressed forward.

Wyman moved away to examine his prize. "Alas! It is not Napoleon Bonaparte, but Louis Napoleon! Know it?" He showed it to the Frenchman as he motioned them to their seats and resumed his patter. "All the Napoleons took a hand at coinage, but Louis didn't think the picture of his face on the coin did him justice. The coins were recalled. Out of twenty-eight thousand issued, all but twenty-three were withdrawn from circulation. This is one of the wanderers. You could sell it for a hundred dollars, perhaps, eh, Count? Any offers?"

"Let me see it." The Count reached forth an eager hand.

"He doubts my word," began Wyman. "He thinks I'd deceive him—that it is the coin of fortune I hold. He would——"

But here Miss Day interrupted him and took the box herself. "You know far too much about them," she said and placed the box on the table, pulled out the little drawers in which the coins lay, and with a gesture invited her friends to look at them.

"Now that the barker has drawn the crowd, the collection will be displayed by Mlle. Day, the renowned American numismatist!" cried Wyman, his hands before his mouth in megaphone fashion.

"Oliver Wyman!" she exclaimed in exasperation. "What is the matter with you? Are you mad?"

"Yes," he whispered in her ear, as the others gathered about the box, "in a way—as you know. And I haven't seen you for a year!"

She turned from him quickly, and the color flooded her cheeks.

MRS. SEARS was examining the widow's mite with indolent interest. Then, still indolently, she took up another coin. "Here is another five-franc piece," she drawled, and lifted the money closer to spell out the inscription: "N-a-p-Napoleon——"

With a quick motion the Count seized the coin from her hand, muttering an apology. Wyman's eyes were on him and he noticed how the slim white fingers touched each letter of the inscription, "Napoleon—Emperor," and he was sure when, a moment later, the coin fell to the table that it was not the result of accident. His ear had heard the muffled sound as the money struck the polished wood!

The Count caught it up in a second with a word in deprecation of his awkwardness. "Napoleon? That is true, madamoiselle,"—his voice rang clear, almost defiant,—"but how unfortunate that it is not the 'coin of fortune,' not even of its coinage! It might so easily have been. I am desolate that it is not. It would have been a little fortune!"

"Fortune!" exclaimed practical George Root. "A million dollars? I should think so!"

"You forget the interest," reminded Wyman, who had never taken his eyes from the Count's hands. "That note has been drawing interest for a hundred years. It represents over seven millions now!"

They stared at him.

"Seven millions," repeated Root in an awed voice.

"Imagine one coin, a single piece of silver, being worth seven million dollars!" broke in Mrs. Sears. "But the French Government would never redeem it, not after all these years. The idea is absurd!"

Wyman waited for a moment before he asked, "What do you say to that, De Viarde?"

The Count answered readily enough, "Not redeem Napoleon's promise? I assure you, madame, the French Government will not hesitate an instant, not an instant! Whoever presents the coin holding the note signed by Napoleon Bonaparte will undobtedly receive the sum mentioned in it!"

"And the interest," reminded Wyman.

"And the interest," agreed the Count.

Mrs. Sears sighed as though she could not unperstand. "Isn't it too bad that you haven't that five-franc piece, my dear! It should be among the 'coins of sentiment.' I don't think your uncle was the successful collector he was considered or he would have had it there. It has been very interesting, but we must not forget that we are due at

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the Bentons' before midnight. We must go, my dear," she touched Adele's cheeks with her lips. "I shall see you to-morrow. Good-by."

THE Count walked across to Miss Day to bend over her hand, when Wyman spoke, rather abruptly: "Don't go yet! Wait a minute and I'll show you a trick I learned in India from those clever fakirs. I've grown so skilful that I'm thinking of applying for a place in the vaudeville circuit."

"It won't take long?" hesitated Mrs. Sears.

The Count gently touched her arm. "It is late, madame," he reminded her in his soft, musical voice, "and you said we had far to go."

"It won't take a minute," insisted Wyman, "and your watch is probably slow. You can say it is, anyway."

There was a chorus of inquiry and softly clapped applause. Wyman waved his hands in a lordly fashion.

"Wait! The show has just begun. Monsieur,"—he turned to the Count,—"you look incredulous. I will have to convince you of my power."

The Count would have spoken, but Wyman peremptorily demanded silence, and there was a dominant note in his voice as he said:

"As a Frenchman you should never be without a French coin in your pocket."

The Count started and his face changed color. Wyman waved his hand again in a mysterious manner. "I will thank you, Monsieur le Comte, to hand me the coin in your waistcoat pocket," he said suavely, —"the coin I placed there by the power of my magic!"

The two men stared at each other. De Viarde made no motion to heed the request, and Wyman stepped nearer. "Monsieur le Comte, they will doubt my magic." He held out his hand.

The Count's lips tightened and his eyes glittered unpleasantly as he glared at Wyman and swept the room with a lightning glance. He had no choice; he could not risk a scene, and, with a laugh that rang somewhat hollow, he slipped his fingers into his pocket and drew out the coin that he had hidden there a few minutes before with a motion as quick as any Wyman had made.

Wyman took the coin and kissed his fingers to the company: "You see?" he said softly. "Wouldn't I make a hit in vaudeville? So sorry you have to go, Mrs. Sears! I will show you and the Count some more tricks some day. Adieu, Monsieur le Comte!" He drew his heels together and bowed formally. "I do hope that you will not be late at the Bentons'!"

De Viarde deliberately turned his back to him, but after he had said good-by to Miss Day he drew near enough to say, in an undertone:

"You are very clever, monsieur, you—and your tricks!"

Low as the words were spoken, Adele caught them, and when the others had gone she came to Wyman. "What did he mean?" she asked curiously.

He stood looking at the silver coin in his hand with a curious expression that made her cry, with a breathless gasp: "You don't think—he couldn't have thought that it was the coin of fortune?"

"He thought so enough to try and steal it!" Wyman spoke grimly. "I saw him put it in his pocket, and I took it from him as I did because I knew you wouldn't want a row. He was pretty confident that it was what every man, woman and child in France has tried to get possession of for a hundred years—Napoleon's famous 'coin of fortune'!"

Her eyes were big with awe and her voice little more than a whisper as she said: "I can't believe it!"

"Shall we break it in two and see?"

Her hand caught his. "No. Don't destroy it! Perhaps it isn't the 'coin of fortune.' I'd—I'd rather keep it as it is—for its sentiment and——"

"It is seven millions," he reminded her gravely.

She was silent and then, lifting her face: "Money isn't the only thing in the world!"

Her glance, her voice, held a challenge to which every fiber of his being responded, and the love that he had carried to Japan and back again rushed into words.

"No, it isn't! The biggest, finest, most wonderful thing in the world can't be bought with money! You know what it is?" He took her hands and held them in a close, tender clasp. "Do you know?" he said.

She made no answer, but her hands made no effort toward freedom.

And at their feet, unheeded, lay either seven million dollars or a piece of silver.

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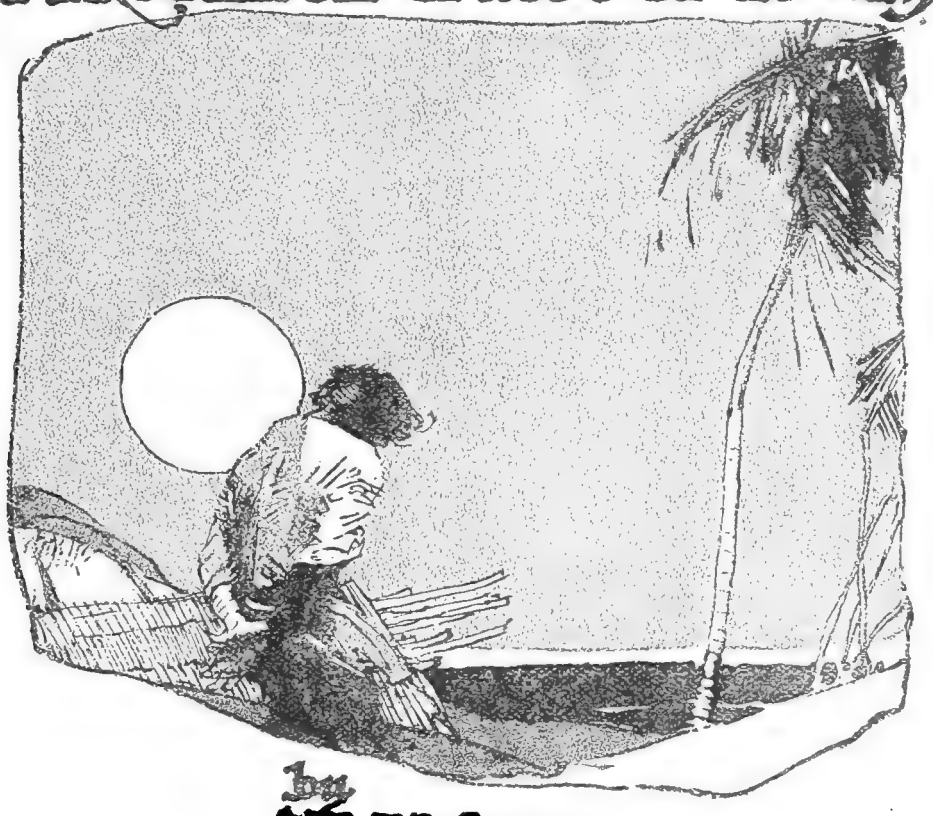
A Robinson Crusoe of To-day



by H. J. Moors

I DO NOT tell this story because either the memory or the relation of the events is pleasant to me. Indeed, it is the record of the most distressing and humiliating experience in my life. But I am impelled to relate it as a protest against the prevalent idea that the existence of a castaway on a tropic island is one of comparative comfort and ease.

In my younger days I was in the employ of a firm of merchants at Apia, Samoa, who had established in business in the Ellice Islands a young man of the name of Symonds, son of a well-known missionary. His headquarters were at Funafuti, and after several successful years he had purchased from the "King" of Vaitupu the small, deserted island of Nuulakita—"Little Land." It lies some one hundred and fifty miles southeast of Funafuti, alone amidst extensive shoals. Symonds' ambition was to people and plant it, but not a native could he induce to make his home there, for the Ellice Islanders firmly believed the place was haunted by evil spirits. Not long after this, Symonds died suddenly, and I was sent to Funafuti in the company's schooner to install a new manager, with instructions to stop at Nuulakita on the homeward voyage, inspect the little island and set a value on it as an asset of Symonds' estate.

We left Funafuti with a southeast trade-wind that soon died away, and for days we drifted over a glassy sea in intolerable heat. Finally, on the last day of February, we reached Nuulakita and sailed slowly along its coast, searching for an anchorage and landing.

The island was much higher than the usual coral atolls, but, like them, it was flat-topped and nearly circular in shape, being perhaps a little more than a mile in diameter. It was covered with tropic verdure which gave off, morning and evening, a delightfully spicy odor.

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In a short time we came to anchor in seven fathoms of water, in a convenient place on the west side of the island where we could see an opening through the reef. Four of the ship's crew and I made an easy landing, but, finding a strong shore current running, we were compelled to haul our boat up on the sands, for I intended to take at least two hours to inspect the place.

The captain advised me to examine the place hastily, for his barometer warned him of a change that was imminent, and this was the dangerous season in these latitudes.

The beach sands were coarse and sloped steeply upward for above a hundred feet to the dead level of the land above, which was elevated no more than thirty feet above the surrounding ocean. Here, a few feet back from the edge, the greenery began.

Before proceeding to explore the place I invited the native boys to come with me, but one by one they declined, explaining that the island was surely haunted.

Above the sand beach, where had formerly been a settlement, a few jackfruit trees were deteriorating, being overgrown with clinging vines and other parasites. Here I discovered some native sepulchers which, besides a well that I found later on, were the only actual signs of man's handiwork upon the island.

Pandanus, which seems to delight in sterile soil and in opposition to the elements, now predominated, stretching forth its weird branches and standing upon its singular stilt-like roots, an omen of desolation. Here and there I penetrated the bush, observing the nature of the soil and noting it in my book.

I must have been nearly opposite where our vessel lay, when I came to a beautiful lagoon, with charming vistas and lovely glades leading in various directions. Here was a sequestered walk along an inner and quieter beach, beneath the cooling shades of wide-spreading trees, the unruffled little lake showing like a bed of burnished silver draped in velvety green. Ah, how lovely it then appeared!

Along the outer seabeach I had noticed many turtle tracks, but on the inner beach were none at all; but there was no lack of life, for I soon came upon a place where, scattered irregularly along the shores of the lagoon, unnumbered seabirds had made their nests, some in trees, and some, according to their habit, in the crannies of the coral rocks which everywhere abounded. Terns, gannets, frigate birds, bo'suns and plover were in countless thousands, and so tame that they scarcely moved when I stepped perilously near their nests. Rats were also present in legions, and some were to be seen even high up in the trees.

I WAS about to return to the beach and continue my circuit around the island, when I heard a musket-shot—a signal for my return, for the sky had darkened and I felt sure that the glass had gone lower. I started directly for the boat-landing.

Towards the center of the island the trees grew less vigorously, and were fewer in number, and many old trunks lay prone on the earth. Here and there odd-shaped coral blocks barred the way, and frequently turned me considerably aside. Some of the standing trees were withered by the consuming sun, or blanched by recurrent storms, and vines covered their whitening remains. The walking became exceedingly difficult, for it was hard to penetrate this broad-leafed, stout-stemmed vinery.

I had already had several nasty falls, but had escaped actual injury, until at last I stepped on what appeared a sound tree-trunk crossing a vine-covered chasm and felt myself swiftly descending into space, clutching wildly at the vines as I passed through them.

II

MY HEAD having come into violent contact with a jutting coral, I lay huddled and senseless at the bottom of a deep pit which in former years had been used as a well and now was partly filled by the action of the elements.

When I revived all was darkness, and rain was falling in torrents. In fact it must have been the cool drenching I had had which brought me to my senses.

I tried to raise my arms and found them fortunately uninjured, but one knee had been severely bruised and my back was badly wrenched, while my head ached as if it were about to split in two, and a great lump explained why I had wasted hours in this situation.

Though it was very dark, with occasional flashes of lightning, I found no great difficulty, except from my own injuries, in get-

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ting upward, as these native wells are so constructed that the owners may walk down one side to dip the water with their shells. When I approached the mouth of the pit and thrust my head through the sopping vines, it seemed as if the world were at an end. I could hear the screaming wind rush through the now leafless branches, and great boughs and missiles of many sorts were flying through the air, making it hazardous to rise above the level.

I thought of our brigantine and hoped she had got away without losing her anchors. At that moment, though the tempest roared, I did not fear for her safety, for from the direction of the wind I was sure she had not been blown ashore. Such a gale would inevitably drive her far away to westward, and her return in this region of frequent calms was quite sure to be slow and tedious. And here I was, all unprovided for, and destined to pass some days in utter loneliness. In time they would come back again, and I must contrive to exist till they turned up. This would be an adventure to recount to my children as they gathered round me in the evening.

How was I then to know that this raging cyclone had utterly destroyed our ship, and that, while I sat shivering in my hole, my brave companions were in their watery graves? Never a word was ever heard from them again, and no fragment of our poor vessel was discovered to mark her loss.

When the light returned the sun was not visible. It was not safe to make my exit yet, but, thank God! I had my pipe and tobacco with me, and some matches that were not yet spoiled. Fool! Fool! Everlasting fool that I was, I wasted several of those precious matches before I lighted my damp tobacco.

It was well on in the afternoon when the pangs of hunger drove me forth to seek provender of some sort. Though the force of the gale was quite strong enough to impede me greatly, I managed to struggle through the torn shrubbery and tangled vines until I once more gained the open beach, and stood appalled before the ocean's sublime fury. Great seas hurled themselves at the trifling island, and actually threatened to engulf it, for in places sheets of water rushed up the high, sloping beach and penetrated far inland, destroying much of the vinery, I afterwards found.

Had anything been left for me? I would look and see.

I stood upon the very spot where our boat had landed, under the identical trees our men had climbed for nuts. There lay the empty husks, reminders of their visit, but there was nothing of any value to be seen. Evidently the men, belated till the latest moment by my strange disappearance, had hurried aboard to save the ship.

ACCORDING to my calculation I had now been above forty hours without food. Worn out by the wretched weather, and quite famished, I grasped a stick to aid my injured leg, and set out to discover food and shelter.

After a painful effort I came to the second patch of coconuts, and was not disappointed, for most of the fruit lay scattered on the ground, shaken down by the storm. Fortunately I had with me a stout pocket-knife which served to open the younger nuts, that I might drink their refreshing contents and eat the wholesome and easily digested pulp within. After a bit of hard work in removing the outer husk, I regaled myself upon a ripe coconut and its firmer and more matured flesh, and this had to serve me, for I saw nothing else that was eatable at this time.

Night came on while I still painfully wandered in search of shelter, and I would have been glad to occupy the pit again had the difficulty of returning there been less formidable. The night proved a wild one, and I lay stretched out to leeward of a gia t tree, whose out-of-ground roots and buttresses gave me just a little protection from the chilling blast. Here in this miserable situation I passed the tedious hours till day appeared.

My injured leg had grown worse and swelled to a considerable size, throbbing and alarming me thoroughly. Hunger and thirst once more assailed me, and painfully I dragged myself forward in the hope of finding some sort of sustenance. If the brigantine had been lost in the hurricane there was very little chance of another vessel's coming to Nuulakita for months and months. Possibly it might be years before the place was visited. Such despairing thoughts as these produced a sort of sinking of the soul, an apathetic sadness. Why struggle farther? But still I wriggled forward over the soft sands, which seemed

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barren enough. A soldier crab crossed my path, and I devoured him raw without a qualm.

Even at this early stage of my imprisonment I must have been a bit delirious, for I began to imagine I heard voices calling me, and at length I fancied I saw people quickly flitting about as if to avoid my vision. Then, as the hallucination grew more fixed, they stood stock still and seemed to beckon me to them. To this very day, when I cast my mind back to these distressing hours, these visions seem very real, and my memory refuses to reject them as mere fantasies of a mind oppressed. There were indeed moments when glimpses of lucid judgment assured me that these exhibitions were only fancies, and I was then able to appreciate the deplorable situation in which I was placed.

In vain I endeavored to commune with God, but my ideas were so confused and indefinite that I wandered from my purpose, and knew and felt my utter failure to obtain the least consolation. Unaccustomed to prayer, and without sufficient faith in divine assistance, how could I expect otherwise?

THE pain in my wounded leg was very great, but I sometimes forgot this because of mental tortures far more acute. Another horrid night, and another boisterous day without the smallest comfort, left me still more helpless. Reason, I believe, was on the verge of collapse, when my remaining physical strength suddenly gave way. Sleep, delirium, or probably prolonged unconsciousness, at length relieved me. Wearied nature could withstand no more.

I awakened at last to behold the splendors of a tropic sunrise, the great orb soon shining directly in my face. My leg was much better for the enforced rest it had had, and, strangest of all, I was not so hungry as I had been.

Melancholy forebodings that perhaps I was fated to die there like a dog and lie unburied, a feast for crabs and noxious vermin, spurred me to further effort. Pride and every primal instinct urged me forward, and at length, exhausted with fatigue and in great pain, I reached the region of the fallen coconuts and, after resting sufficiently, food and drink were again my portion, and later in the day I was enabled to stagger along the deserted beach upon a rude crutch which I had improvised.

Onward, painfully onward, I went, craving satisfying food and rest. Eventually I passed a sandy place marked all about by turtles' flippers—a depression where eggs had surely been deposited. More than a hundred eggs were in the nest, all closely packed together and covered from marauders. Gathering some dry wood and bark, I built a little pile and drew forth my treasured matches.

What an appalling disappointment I was to suffer! The box in which they were contained was crushed quite flat, and the matches themselves were loose in my pocket. Some, being wet, had lost their black heads. I must dry the matches carefully before one of them should be risked. I did not dare to take any chances of failure, and always afterward I would have to keep a smoldering fire or lose this great necessity. A flat coral stone exposed to the sun was selected, and my treasure was spread out in the genial warmth. The ignition papers from the dilapidated box were turned and turned until quite crisp, while each individual match was given careful attention. When all was ready I tried to strike a light—tried and tried again until the whole stock was done, and this with never a glimmer of success!

Raw turtle eggs are not to be commended as a steady diet, but they will serve a turn. In due course I was able to get to the rookery, but most of the birds were gone, dispersed no doubt by the violence of the gale. None of their eggs that I could find were eatable.

I now tried ineffectually to produce fire by rubbing two sticks together as I had often seen the Samoan natives do. No, I could not do the trick. Probably my strength and endurance were insufficient, or possibly I was using a wood ill adapted to the purpose.

I BEGAN to think of preparing myself some sort of shelter—at least a lodgment where I might sleep in comparative comfort. My earliest effort produced a kind of windbreak only, roofless and open on one side—a mere wall to shelter me from the night breeze, which in my emaciated condition seemed to penetrate to my very bones.

In the angle I stuffed vines and brush-

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wood to keep out the wind. I might have been fairly comfortable had it not been for the playful rats, which scurried back and forth through the crevices of my wall as if it had been constructed especially for their diversion, and not for my necessity.

Raw turtle eggs when steadily adhered to become absolutely disgusting as a diet, and on the recovery of my leg I sought many expedients that might serve my turn. Raw unsalted meat I could not abide, even when I knew that it was sweet and wholesome. So now when I caught a bird or turtle, I cut the flesh into thin strips and hung them in the sun, or placed them on heated rocks until they received a sort of natural cooking—a recourse not to be recommended to those who have other means. To my prejudiced mind the meat thus served was infinitely preferable to raw, reeking flesh.

As my strength came back, I made it a point to journey completely around the island once a day, that I might scan the horizon for signs of our ship's return, for as yet I had no idea of the sad fate of my late companions.

I have heard of the simple and wonderfully correct method by which castaways invariably keep track of time—notching the departing days on slabs of wood. This did not occur to me until so many days had lapsed that I felt sure, if I attempted this computation, I should start out with an error, and I therefore gave the matter up.

Reflecting upon my unfortunate situation, and the apparent impossibility of supplying needs of any sort, I regretfully remembered the various books I had read, and the wonderful expedients employed by historical castaways to ameliorate their condition. Had I possessed the means, I would have given a great reward for a glance over "Robinson Crusoe" and the "Swiss Family Robinson." From these well-remembered books I believed I might have gleaned some valuable information.

I had been accounted a handy man, yet here I was as helpless, apparently, as a child. Dressed in a worn-out suit of thin pajamas, my only other possessions were a pocket-knife, a note-book and pencil, and a useless pipe, for the small fragment of tobacco I had been possessed of had been nibbled away as a makeshift stimulant.

To escape the pest of rats which greatly troubled my sleep, I constructed a platform of sticks in a low branching tree, fastening these with vines, so that the place was secure. Removing the bark from the trunk of the tree for three or four feet above the ground, I scraped and polished the exposed wood with sand and coral, so that the rats could find no footing on the smooth surface to climb to my apartment. Here in this bower I could sleep peacefully when the nights were breezy, but at other times mosquitoes swarmed, and drove me to the water's edge where they were fewer, or at least less troublesome. But when I was forced from the tree the many varieties of land and sea crabs manifested great interest in my welfare and always persistently annoyed me.

A spell of wet weather set before me urgently the problem of constructing a thatched house, for if I were to be detained upon the island any great length of time, the rainy season would be upon me. Serviceable coconut branches from low trees were easily at hand, but the simple art of rightly plaiting them for thatch cost me many hours of study, though I had frequently seen this work expeditiously performed by mere children. After many failures I at length owned a weather-proof roof, and was much pleased with my performance.

Salt, in small quantities and mixed with sand, I found in several spots, and the need of this mineral seemed so great that I set about its manufacture from sea-water, by evaporation. In this work I was fairly successful, but even this could not make me content with the raw food I was compelled to eat.

Sometimes I thought of building myself a raft, stocking it with food and water in coconut shells, setting a thatched sail, and drifting westward. But after careful consideration, the enterprise seemed foolish and unpractical, and by far too perilous to be undertaken.

Now strongly suspecting the fate of our ship, I might have despaired, but a new idea entered my brain and for some time claimed my careful attention. Many young gannets were by this time occupying nests by the lagoon shore, and I decided to adopt several of these, bringing them up by hand, and afterward employ them to carry away letters describing my deplorable situation and praying for relief. But my first efforts were unsuccessful, and all three of my adop-

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tions were dead birds within a few days. This set me to thinking that perhaps the food I was providing was unsuited to their immature digestions—that raw turtle meat, which they ate with avidity, was a dangerous diet.

I now enlisted another family of birds, and by stoning up several small basins near the reef at high water, I was enabled to catch a small supply of little fish, when the tides had fallen and the water had drained away into the sea. But such a precarious supply as this could not be relied upon, and I sought other means.

After fully a week's effort I had hammered out fibers from green coconut husks, and plaited them into a rough but serviceable line, and a wooden hook completed the equipment. My first efforts with these crude implements were exceedingly discouraging, but perseverance and improvement in the tackle in the end enabled me to become a moderately capable fisherman. With a supply of what appeared a suitable food, I was at length able to bring up a brood of promising birds, who were taught by me to rest on the usual sort of perch provided at the other islands. When my protégés had grown, they were not long in learning to provide for themselves.

While I was engaged in the interesting occupation, a watery, tasteless berry came into bearing, and though I am persuaded that the fruit was all but innutritious, it turned out a welcome addition to my diet, and its slightly acid flavor was very grateful to the palate of one so poor as I.

III

THE hopelessness of my situation and my constant longing to be with my family often quite unnerved me, and surely left me less thankful than I should have been for benefits received and unacknowledged. My mind, at times thoroughly discouraged, recoiled before such an existence. Several months had elapsed and my situation was still unpromising. Abounding leisure and untrammeled freedom palled upon me, and while I longed for the necessities and the superfluities of life, I actually craved the usual and even the silly restrictions of civilization and polite society.

Time flew by, day by day followed by lonesome nights, without any sort of notation on my part. Condemned to dreadful inaction, and incapable of stoicism, my very thoughts sometimes became overshadowed, incoherent and obscured, and they lost their continuity. Unhappily, I was quite debarred from the consolations of religion, for my ideas upon mystic and divine subjects were so utterly hazy, so hopelessly imperfect, as to afford no consolation, and little incentive for thought.

Next to my rescue, I think most of all I desired the possession of fire. No other requisite seemed to me so important. In my early youth I had visited a museum, and had seen there divers instruments employed by savages for the purpose of producing ignition, but strive as I would, I was never able to recollect their precise construction. The forcible rubbing together of two sticks, after the manner so common to Samoans, seemed absolutely beyond my best efforts at imitation. Smoke in plenty I was able to get, but the fire itself constantly eluded my desperate struggles.

THE feeding of my pets had provided a certain amount of occupation, and as the birds rapidly approached maturity, I noted approvingly their greater proficiency in flight. At last all of them were able to make extended excursions. I easily taught them to return at the call of the flag. My tattered pajama coat answered as a signal.

One day while experimenting with my own birds, I called from the skies an utter stranger, who calmly perched himself and squawked loudly for attention. With avidity I searched him for communications, but evidently the animal was off on leave, for he bore no letters. I fed him slowly, and between whiles I wrote what I thought would have been anywhere construed as a touching appeal for assistance. Tearing the leaf out of my note-book I fastened the missive with a part of my fishline, so that it lay flatly underneath the feathers of the back. Providence had at last sent me a means, I thought, and had I been a religious, praying man, I would have thanked God for this assistance. Probably the Almighty rightly interpreted my grateful thoughts.

For several days the new bird continued to resort to my perch, always returning with my message, and it was not until I refused him food continuously, that I was able to get rid of him. Then, some days later, hav-

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ing fastened missives to all three of my birds, I took down the perch and refused to notice them at all—a treatment they could not understand, for from their earliest recollections I had been their only parent.

Within a week after the birds had deserted the island, I reerected the perch, and thenceforth every afternoon I waved my rotting garment, hoping that some intelligible answer would reach me. But days and weeks passed without any sign whatever and I again grew utterly despondent.

The turtle season had come and gone, and the extent of my depredations had so alarmed the island birds that I was now forced to trap those which I would use for provender, or climb the trees at night and secure my victims quietly. Unquestionably the birds were now much shyer, and far less numerous than on my arrival.

ONE day, observing a troop of newly hatched turtles painfully dragging themselves towards the salt water, it occurred to me that if I were to place these in the lagoon and feed them, a plentiful brood could be raised, and turtles would ever after be obtainable at all seasons. However, my first experiment in this line was quite disheartening, for the youngsters were pursued by birds and eels, and the last one was speedily devoured. Persistence, however, generally conquers obstacles, so I constructed a kind of wicker cage made of sticks lashed together with pliant vines, which appeared durable in the water, and this affair, partly submerged and placed in a shady part of the lagoon, enabled me to imprison and preserve above fifty of these odd pets. Succulent leaves and fragments of fish were plentiful enough, and upon these good supplies my protégés grew slowly.

Beside this little turtle-pen, a flat-topped coral block formed a suitable seat, while overhead the luxuriant waving palms and other greenery shaded me from the brilliant tropic sun. Here I would often sit and rest. The place became my house of meditation—my study room, if I may call it so. Solitary, I would recline in this secluded spot and ponder upon my forlorn situation, reflecting always upon the distresses of my poor wife and waiting family. Frequently I would think that death would be a happy release. But then my loved children's images would rise, nerving me to continue the struggle. I am utterly unable to set down here any sentences which will even in part depict my longings for man's society, for an intelligent interchange of feelings and sentiment, and I often compared my own condition unfavorably with that of a felon in his cell. He at least had a jailer and in the end a decent burial.

During most of the day the blinding sun rays would drive me into the shades, and with greatest care I explored every portion of this small island; but I found nothing of peculiar interest.

Worried by insects and other pests, lack of savory nourishment, and sleeplessness at nights—for I never grew immune to the attacks of mosquitoes—I fell into a low fever, and was barely able to provide for my wants.

IT WAS about this time that I began to fancy I heard ringing bells, shouts and calls, and sometimes sounds of distant revelry. Painful investigation clearly showed me the folly of such notions, but I was no sooner cured than the delirium would set in again with extraordinary vigor, leaving me a prey to unseen but formidable terrors.

Sometimes, especially at dusk, stealthy footfalls would follow me, but sudden turnings never seemed to catch my ghostly comrade off his guard. One evening, during a most astounding hallucination, I appeared in the midst of a throng of hideously shaped, curious little personages, much resembling magnified frogs, with short necks, distorted faces, bulging eyes, hunched-up backs and knotted limbs. They seemed so very real that I saluted them with becoming gravity and condescension, whereupon they snickeringly conferred and, laughing maliciously, seemed to beckon me forward, as they danced along with wild abandon. Shaking their streaming and disheveled locks, they jeered and pointed derisively at my clumsy efforts to follow them. Though their faces seemed to gleam with heartless mirth, so strong was my desire for companionship that in my delirium I followed these seeming imps over rugged obstructions until their course led me toward the lagoon, across the placid surface of which they merrily danced, laughing audibly as I made haste to follow them. Irritated but not dismayed, I plunged boldly in. The exercise, and perhaps the bath, were highly beneficial,

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for when I clambered up the rocks my senses had returned.

I found myself close by the perch which I had some time since set up, and there, already alighted and uttering vibrant cries, sat several birds, two of which I recognized as of my own especial breeding. None bore messages, but nevertheless I painfully found food and fed them sumptuously for several days; then decking them with appealing missives, I starved them from the island.

I was now in a singularly desperate state, for my scanty clothes had almost rotted from my body, and neither animal nor shrub seemed to promise suitable material for my covering. My shoes had long since disappeared.

Troubled by indigestion, my appetite had weakened, and with its loss my courage faded. He who had formerly loved to isolate himself at times from all, now craved the company of dumb brutes.

Once more I decided to entice the distant birds to a renewed perch, and they returned upon my signals of a welcome. At last I found a bird with a letter written in the Samoan tongue and addressed to one of the teachers. Though I could not write grammatically and with precision in the native language, I was able to read sufficiently well. After divesting the missive of its religious commonplaces, which begin and end every native communication in these latitudes, I saw that the writer, living on a distant island, had no knowledge or care for me, for he addressed a fellow worker in the mission field on topics of mutual interest.

IV

DETAINING the bird for some time by such entertainment as was sure to please him and his comrades, I now prepared several messages in such Samoan as I could muster, and then, having neglected the animals to induce them to set out, I once more resumed work upon a construction somewhat resembling a monstrous top, which I proposed should spin continuously in a groove of soft dry wood until ignition would follow. It must not be supposed that this was my first effort in this line, for I can recollect at least four other constructions which were wholly useless. By my repeated failures I had at least acquired some experience.

Here I had been for months laboring desperately to obtain fire—a subject of but trifling worry to the sagacious savage. The testing of this new machine was to me a great event, and with nerves high strung and heart palpitating in anxious expectation, I proceeded. A little white smoke at first appeared, so minute in volume as to be just visible. I was not unduly elated until the smoke rose briskly and changed its color. On this my doubting hopes were changed into certainties, and, thank God! a tiny spark was kindled amongst the woody dusts of friction!

Without abatement of my efforts I saw it grow more and more distinct, until I was able to take away the contrivance and invigorate the combustion with gentle breaths. Tending it with assiduous care, I saw the welcome flames light the materials I had provided.

From this moment I date a comfortable change of diet, and I may say that in the completion of this labor and a contemplation of its results to me I was happier—at any rate calmer—than I had been since my arrival on the island. At last, after months and months of unremitting effort, I was in possession of one of man's most pressing needs—one of God's greatest blessings—fire. How delicious seemed the food now grilled over the brilliant coals! How satisfying and wholesome the diet! What schemes of cookery I devised—and saw fall to pieces very speedily for lack of pottery and metal! I built a fireplace of corals, and soon saw these crumble into lime. As no other sort of rocks was procurable, and useful clay did not exist on the island, I was at length reduced to using water-soaked billets covered as far as possible with sand. This makeshift fireplace had to answer my purposes.

The blinding sun rays, stinging insects, or possibly my smoky cookery, caused me about this time to suffer from a severe inflammation of the eyes, which became extremely painful—so much so, that for days I could barely face the light. After various expedients, I stewed some fragments of coconut root in empty shells, and this astringent decoction effected a wondrous cure. But though I could raise the temperature of water sufficiently for this brew by dropping a few heated stones into the shells containing it, I was unable to cook by any such primitive method.

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The return of the rainy season set me again at work upon my habitation, whose thatch I renewed and whose frame I strengthened. The unlearned savage would have accomplished in a few hours' time, and in a more durable and artistic manner, all that I now produced in an effort extending over many days. For instance, the cocoanut branches out of which I wove my thatch, would have been salt-water dipped, and then dried in the sun, thus making the stuff proof against insects. My bungled product, improperly made up, and without this precaution, was the worse for caterpillars within a month.

The sea-birds came and went as usual, but none brought me messages, and the even tenor of my existence resumed its intellect-killing pace. When I looked upon my almost bare limbs and body, exposed now to the devouring sun, covered only in patches with tattered rags, I forgot all thankful impulses, and deplored my miserable fate.

I doubted the existence of a benign and watchful Creator.

V

MY MISERY was soon deepened, aye, made insupportable, by the loss of my precious knife, the one invaluable treasure that yet remained. As I was stooping over my turtle cage to observe the welfare of its occupants it slipped from my pocket and dropped into the water. Its exact position I instantly marked, but for all that, and though the water was barely five feet deep, I was never able to recover this precious implement, which evidently sank deep in the bottom ooze.

After that the daily victims of my food requirements were murdered with unfashioned weapons, and their bleeding flesh riven from their bones, for lack of a cutting instrument. I would have used a shell, or a bamboo knife, but the indigenous shells were hopelessly unsuitable, and bamboo did not grow in such situations. With the remains of what had been my pajama coat, I pieced out and reenforced my trousers, merely for decency's sake, for such impulses still remained with me—I thought indelibly fixed, but I have reason now to think otherwise.

Sometimes while traversing the bush I distinctly heard voices calling, and more distant answers from divergent quarters. Occasionally these appeared close at hand —mere whispers, intended for my especial ear—supernatural confidences most disquieting.

Sometimes I shouted in reply, and the echoless bush brought back no answer. Light footfalls close at my heels annoyed me so in my evening walks that in mortal fear I took shelter in my cabin directly after sunset. During the day I once or twice tried to sing, and was shocked at my puny and inharmonious effort. The extreme littleness of my voice astounded me.

By the seaside the talk of the muttering waves seemed addressed to me in piteous, complaining accents, and I, incapable of understanding, stood speechless, often vacant, quite bereft.

For some time I had been of opinion that the bad weather would soon have its ending, and that probably a gale of wind would mark its exit. The accuracy of my calculations was justified, for after several days of great heat and unexampled calm, one of those sudden convulsions of tropic violence assailed the island with cyclonic force. My frail hut was bodily lifted by the blast as if it were a feather's weight, and no portion of it or its contents ever met my eye again. Torrential rain in blinding sheets, almost suffocating in its profusion, utterly drenched me, and the great ocean, lashed into a wild fury, seemed bent on submerging the little island, as it had done on previous occasions.

To enter the bush with hopes of obtaining shelter was certainly vain, no doubt dangerous, for flying branches filled the air. There, on the weather beach and just above the limit of the raging sea, I faced this sweeping hurly-burly, my habitation and my every possession wrecked and gone. From now forward I must exist without the consolation of a house or fire, for I had no implement to work with. Could a just and pitiful God permit and continue such anguish? For what explainable reason could such a torture be extended? No! No! There was no God! My little faith, long shaken, now vanished. Why believe in the gentleness of a Redeemer, when such portents of implacable, inscrutable wrath alone were visible?

I ran and hid myself behind a pile of corals, quailing before the splendors and the stupendous power of the storm. The skies seemed filled with unseen spirits, whose

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wails and prolonged cries were awesome in the last degree, and one of those fits of unaccountable terror, which had previously assailed me since the period of my illness, now shook me mentally and physically. Through the wild wrack of the assailing clouds I believed I saw a majestic, though fierce and cruel face, threateningly directed at my concealment, and a voice of continuous thunder reverberated along the skies, calling my attendance.

Forgetting now all of my former religious instruction, controlled by insensate fear alone—the most powerful of human passions—I emerged and crept forth to the open beach, and, prostrating myself humbly, I prayed miserably to the demon of destruction—to the visible power which wrought such prodigies before my very eyes!

In answer to my supplications the gale seemed to rise in height, and I would have fled, but a monstrous sea—a giant amongst its fellows—caught me and rushed me along the sands. Tousled and half filled with sea-water, divested of the last shred of raiment, I fell face downward high up the beach, with just enough strength remaining to save myself.

The thought ran racing through my mind that I must once more reach the friendly excavation. Laboriously I crawled upward past the water's reach, and I now found myself in the region of the island graves, a place I had long avoided. Horrors upon horrors! There, before me, seemed to sit and ponder the shades of the departed! Each upon his or her particular pile of uncemented masonry, animate, for I saw them move, their stony and inscrutable gaze fixed mercilessly on me! As I approached, for there was no alternative, the ghostly company seemed gradually to vanish, and other and more distant images took their places.

My condition of delirious stupefaction was suddenly and violently ended by a blinding flash and a rush of elemental force which dashed me to the earth. A great burao tree had been riven from top to root by lightning, and the instant and appalling thunder-clap all but deafened me.

Recovering, I groveled in the slush and begged the clemency of the potential demon whose efforts were so manifest, while the lightning sputtered close, and peal on peal of thunder rolled and shook the very foundations of the island. I can now in these later days fully appreciate and completely understand why the unlearned savage addresses himself to the majesty of the thunder god.

FROM the ending of this storm, my days were spent in searching for food and praying to the fiend, and my nights were troubled with such realistic dreams and phantoms—if such they were—as wholly to wreck my reason. Naked and unkempt, I roamed over the limited extent the land afforded; attached now to no particular place, and heedless of any attempts at rescue, I no longer kept a lookout.

Like a wild man that I was, I gleaned such food as the place afforded, untroubled by qualms of any sort. Sentiments of cruelty—exultant passion—shameful and aggressive confidence, impelled me to silly excesses, which were sometimes upon occasion curbed by fear of the Evil One, and the constant superstition that his myrmidons always watched my actions, to note any sign of insubordination. These realistic jailers frequently addressed me insultingly, in an unintelligible way, always jeering at my condition, and when I resisted their intrusion, they would flee, assembling further on and hooting strangely.

Tugged at by unnamable terrors, I constantly shifted my stopping-places, for no long interval of peace was assured to me. Deprived of all means whereby to labor, and feeding and sleeping like a beast of prey, I had descended instead of advancing. Shame I no longer felt at my condition, and when full-bellied and with my brain inactive, I slept despite annoying insects whose painful stinging I now disregarded or laughed at.

One day while drowsily musing, new sounds assailed my ears—more intelligible, more harmonious they seemed, than the others I had been accustomed to. Though they evidently came from behind, I expected the new breed of infernals to deploy suddenly in front, as their predecessors had always done, therefore I did not turn until one of them laid rough hand on me. This was a new experience, for till now the busy imps had under close inspection seemed intangible.

Turning to the touch, a number of figures in white garb met my astonished gaze, and though their countenances seemed pitying and beneficent, I knew them for their deceitful worth, and cursed their uncalled-for

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interference. I would have chased them from the island. Till now all goblins and little inquisitive imps had fled before my rage, but these new-comers closed in around me, seizing my weapon and overpowering my fiercest efforts, until I lay fast in bonds, and quite insensible.

VI

THE END had come. I had been rescued by an adventurous and devoted party of Samoan missionaries and their Ellice Island followers. At last these good people had become acquainted with my sad situation through the various appealing missives I had sent out by my sea-bird post.

Strange to say, nearly if not all of my messages had safely reached some inhabited island, but unfortunately none could read and understand the English words. Intelligent white traders did not live in the group in those days, and the trading schooners which had formerly called quite regularly had found it unprofitable to do so since Symonds' trading operations had become an institution which absorbed most of the copra.

During all of the time that I had been imprisoned on Nuulakita, but one single vessel had called at a distant island, and the perplexed teacher begged the passing captain to decipher the unintelligible paper which had arrived so strangely. He who first found out my situation lived far to northward, and it was wholly impossible for him to interfere directly.

Paulo, the teacher on Nanomea, sent message after message through the group, and these timely explanations came to the southern teachers, enlightening them as to the real meaning of my misspelled and almost unintelligible Samoan notes which they had been getting from time to time by bird post —a letter-delivery service which was soon actively employed in my behalf.

As soon as the defective system would allow, the teachers consulted, and one bold spirit—an aged man, brave old Alamoa—journeyed from Nicutao to Vaitupu, and on to Funafuti, in an open boat, to give direction to the work of rescue.

Prudence had dictated that my rescuers should wait at least until the hurricane season had passed, but this delay was short, and all were soon prepared.

I was afterward told how Alamoa's eloquence and piety had moved his hearers to resolve upon the precarious adventure; how his eyes flashed in their sunken depths and his whole frame had shaken with holy rapture at the opportunity thus presented of risking the remnants of his own life and the lives of his friends, to carry out the precepts of their loved instructors—to set before the whole world, as it were, an example of charity and devotion, by embarking upon this dangerous mission which offered not the slightest encouragement to man's natural cupidity. It was asserted afterwards that no other teacher in the whole group could have enlisted the people in such a movement, but I much doubt this.

As an example of infinite unselfishness, of noble devotion to high convictions of duty, I think that the work of my difficult rescue can be favorably compared with many other shining records of Christian endeavor. Thank God, no man came to any harm by it, and all appeared delighted with the countenance and success that God had given them.

Fools, inoculated with a contempt for a noble work, who narrowly and unwisely look upon the broad and elevating results of missionary efforts only to discover petty weaknesses and evidences of individual misdirection or backslidings, are usually men unworthy of credence or prejudiced by selfish interests.

THE original party of thirteen adventurers set out from Funafuti in an ordinary open boat, three oars on a side, and using a battered compass as their only guide. After a rest of several days on Nukulailai, and with increased stores of food and water, the perilous journey to Nuulakita was successfully attempted.

Who can with pen or type recount the raptures of a return such as mine turned out to be?

By kindness and generosity, my employers sought to reward the good teachers and the workers who had saved me from a living death at the imminent risk of their own lives, and my good wife and children set down in feeling terms the heavy obligations under which they lay; but I, who more immediately knew the case, felt that a long life of thankfulness to and respect for the good people of the Ellice Group no more than paid my score.

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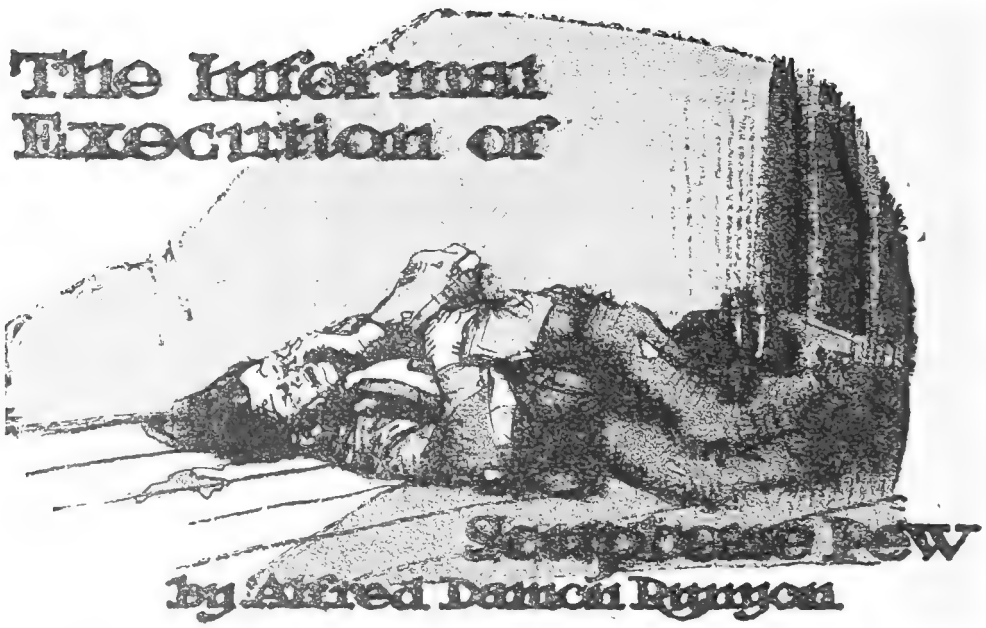

What is it the Good Book says? I read it last night—it said:
That he who sheddeth another man's blood by man shall his blood be shed!
That's as fair as a man could ask it, who lives by the gun and knife—
But the Law don't give him an even break when it's taking away his life.
Ho, the Law's unfair when it uses a chair, and a jolt from an unseen Death;
Or it makes him flop to a six-foot drop and a rope shuts off his breath;
If he's got to die let him die by the Book, with a Death that he can see,
By a gun or knife, as he went through life, and both legs kicking free!

—Songs of the "Shut-Ins."

THE condemned man in the cell next to us laughed incessantly. He had been sentenced that morning, and they told us he had started laughing as soon as the words, "may the Lord have mercy on your soul" were pronounced. He was to be taken to the penitentiary next day to await execution.

Chicago Red had manifested a lively interest in the case. The man had killed a railroad brakeman, so one of the guards told us; had killed him coldly, and without provocation. The trial had commenced since our arrival at the county jail and had lasted three days, during which time Red talked of little else.

From the barred windows of the jail corridor, when we were exercising, we could see the dingy old criminal court across the yard and Red watched the grim procession to and from the jail each day. He speculated on the progress of the trial; he knew when the case went to the jury, and when he saw the twelve men, headed by the two old bailiffs returning after lunch the third day, he announced:

"They've got the verdict, and it's first degree murder. They ain't talking and not a one has even grinned."

Then when the unfortunate was brought back, laughing that dismal laugh, Red said:

"He's nutty. He was nutty to go. It ain't exactly right to swing that guy."

Red and I were held as suspects in connection with an affair which had been committed a full forty-eight hours before we landed in town. We had no particular fear of being implicated in the matter, and the officers had no idea that we had anything to do with it, but they were holding us as evidence to the public that they were working on the case. We had been "vagged" for ten days each.

It was no new experience for us in any respect—not even the condemned man, for we had frequently been under the same roof with men sentenced to die. The only unusual feature was Red's interest in the laughing man.

"Red," I asked, as we sat playing cards, "did you ever kill a man?"

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He dropped a card calmly, taking the trick, and as he contemplated his hand, considering his next lead, he answered:

"For why do you ask me that?"

"Oh, I don't know; I just wondered," I said. "You've seen and done so many things that I thought you might accidentally have met with something of the sort."

"It isn't exactly a polite question," he replied. "I've seen some murders. I've seen quite a few, in fact. I've seen some pulled off in a chief's private office, when they was sweating some poor stiff, and I've seen some other places."

"Did you ever kill a man?" I insisted.

He studied my lead carefully.

"I never did," he finally answered. "That is to say, I never bumped no guy off personal. I never had nothing to do with no job from which come ghosts to wake me up at night and bawl me out. They say a guy what kills a man never closes his eyes again, even when he really sleeps. I go to the hay, and my eyes are shut tight, so I know I ain't to be held now or hereafter for nothing like that."

We finished the game in silence, and Red seemed very thoughtful. He laid the cards aside, rolled a cigarette, and said:

"Listen! I never killed no guy personal, like I say; I mean for nothing he done to me. I've been a gun and crook for many years, like you know, but I'm always mighty careful about hurting any one permanent. I'm careful about them pete jobs, so's not to blow up no harmless persons, and I always tell my outside men that, when they have to do shooting, not to try to hit any one. If they did, accidental, that ain't my fault. One reason I took to inside work was to keep from having to kill any one. I've been so close to being taken that I could hear the gates of the Big House slam, and one little shot would have saved me a lot of trouble, but I always did my best to keep from letting that shot go. I never wanted to kill no man. I've been in jams where guys were after me good and strong, and I always tried to get by without no killings.

"I said I never killed a guy. I helped once, but it wasn't murder. It's never worried me a —— bit since, and I sleep good."

He walked to the window and peered out into the yard where a bunch of sparrows were fluttering about. Finally he turned and said:

"I hadn't thought of that for quite a while, and I never do until I see some poor stiff that's been tagged to go away. Some of them make me nervous—especially this tee-hee guy next to us. I'll tell you about Soupbone Pew—some day you can write it, if you want to."

SOUPBONE PEW was a rat who trained years ago with Billy Coulon, the Honey Grove Kid, and a bunch of other old timers that you've never seen. It was before my time, too, but I've heard them talk about him. He was in the Sioux City bank tear-off, when they all got grabbed and were sent to the Big House for fifteen years each. In them days Soupbone was a pretty good guy. He had nerve, and was smart, and stood well with everybody, but a little stretch in the big stir got to him. He broke bad. Honey Grove laid a plan for a big spring—a get-away—while they were up yonder. It looked like it would go through, too, but just as they were about ready, Soupbone got cold feet and gave up his insides.

For that he got a pardon, and quit the road right off. He became a railroad brakeman, and showed up as a shack running between Dodge City and La Junta. And he became the orneriest white man that God ever let live, too.

To hoboes and guns he was like a reformed soak toward a drunk. He treated them something fierce. He was a big, powerful stiff, who could kill a man with a wallop of his hands, if he hit him right, and his temper soured on the world. Most likely it was because he was afraid that every guy on the road was out to get him because of what he'd done, or maybe it was because he knew that they knew he was yellow. Anyway, they never tried to do him, that job belonging to Coulon, Honey Grove and the others.

Soupbone cracked that no 'bo could ride his division, and he made it good, too. He beat them up when they tried it, and he made it so strong that the old heads wouldn't go against a try when he was on the run. Once in a while some kid took a stab at it, but if he got caught by Soupbone he regretted it the rest of his life. I've heard of that little road into Hot Springs, where they say a reward used to be offered to any 'bo that rode it, and how a guy beat it by getting in the water-tank; and I've personally met that Wyoming gent on the

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Union Pacific, and all them other guys they say is so tough, but them stories is only fairy-tales for children beside what could be told about Pew. He went an awful route.

I've known of him catching guys in the pilot and throwing scalding water in on them; I've heard tell of him shoveling hot cinders into empties on poor bums laying there asleep. That trick of dropping a coupling-pin on the end of a wire down alongside a moving train, so that it would swing up underneath and knock a stiff off the rods, was about the mildest thing he did.

He was simply a devil. The other railroad men on the division wouldn't hardly speak to him. They couldn't stand his gaff, but they couldn't very well roar at him keeping 'boes off his trains because that was what he was there for.

His longest suit was beating guys up. He just loved to catch some poor old broken down bum on his train and pound the everlasting stuffing out of him. He's sent many a guy to the hospital, and maybe he killed a few before my acquaintance with him, for all I know.

Once in a while he ran against some live one—some real gun, and not a bum—who'd give him a battle, but he was there forty ways with a sap and gat, and he'd shoot as quick as he'd slug. He didn't go so strong on the real guns, if he knew who they was, and I guess he was always afraid they might be friends of Honey Grove or Coulon.

He was on the run when I first heard of him, and some of the kids of my day would try to pot him from the road, when his train went by, but they never even come close. I've heard them talk of pulling a rail on him and letting his train go into the ditch, but that would have killed the other trainmen, and they was some good guys on that same run then. The best way to do was to fight shy of Soupbone, and keep him on ice for Honey Grove and Coulon.

TRAINING with our mob in them days was a young kid called the Manchester Slim—a real kid, not over eighteen, and as nice and quiet a youngster as I ever see. He wasn't cut out for the road. It seems he'd had some trouble at home and run away. Old man Muller, that Dutch prowler, used to have him on his staff, but he never let this kid in on any work for some reason. He was always trying to get Slim to go home.

"Der road is hell for der kits," he used to say. "Let der ole stiffs vork out dere string, und don't make no new vuns."

The Slim paid no attention to him. Still he had no great love for the life, and probably would have quit long before if he hadn't been afraid some one would think he was scared off.

They was a pete job on at La Junta, which me and 'Frisco Shine and Muller had laid out. We had jungled up—camped—in a little cottonwood grove a few miles out of town, and was boiling out soup—nitro-glycerine—from dynamite, you know—and Muller sent the Slim into town to look around a bit. It was Winter and pretty cold. We had all come in from the West and was headed East. We was all broke bad, too, and needed dough the worst way.

Slim come back from town much excited. He was carrying a Denver newspaper in his hand.

"I've got to go home, Mull," he said, running up to the old man and holding out the paper. "Look at this ad."

Muller read it and called to me. He showed me a little want ad. reading that Gordon Keleher, who disappeared from his home in Boston two years before, was wanted at home because his mother was dying. It was signed Pelias Keleher, and I knew who he was, all right—president of the National Bankers' Association.

"Well, you go," I said, right off the reel, and I could see that was the word he was waiting for.

"For certainly he goes," said Muller. "Nail der next rattler."

"All the passengers are late, but there's a freight due out of here to-night; I asked," said Slim.

"How much dough iss dere in dis mob?" demanded Muller, frisking himself. We all shook ourselves down, but the most we could scare up was three or four dollars.

"If you could wait until after to-night," I says, thinking of the job, but Muller broke me off with:

"Ve don't vant him to vait. Somedings might happens."

"I'd wire home for money, but I want to get to Kansas City first," said Slim. "That paper is a couple of days old, and there's no telling how long it may have been running that ad. I can stop over in K. C. long enough to get plenty of dough from some

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people I know there. I'm going to grab that freight."

"Soupbone on dat freight," said the 'Frisco Shine, a silent, wicked black.

"Ve'll see Soub," said Muller quietly. "I guess maype he von't inderfere mit dis case."

We decided to abandon the job for the night, and all went uptown. The Slim was apparently very much worried, and he kept telling us that if he didn't get home in time he'd never forgive himself, so we all got dead-set on seeing him started.

We looked up the conductor of the freight due out that night and explained things to him. None of us knew him, but he was a nice fellow.

"I tell you, boys," he said, "I'd let the young fellow ride, but you'd better see my head brakeman, Soupbone Pew. He's a tough customer, but in a case like this he ought to be all right. I'll speak to him myself."

Muller went after Pew. He found him in a saloon, drinking all by his lonesome, although there was a crowd of other railroad men in there at the time. Muller knew Pew in the old days, but there was no sign of recognition between them. The old Dutchman explained to Pew very briefly, winding up with:

"It vould pe a gread personal favor mit me, Soub; maype somedimes I return it."

"He can't ride my train!" said Pew shortly. "That's flat. No argument goes."

The Dutchman looked at him long and earnestly, murder showing in his eyes, and Pew slunk back close to the bar, and his hand dropped to his hip.

"Soub, der poy rides!" said Muller, his voice low but shaking with anger. "He rides your rattler. Und if anyding happens by dot poy, de Honey Grove Kit von't get no chance at you! Dot's all, Soub!"

But when he returned to us, he was plainly afraid for the Slim.

"You don't bedder go to-nid," he said. "Dot Soub is a defil, und he'll do you."

"I'm not afraid," said Slim. "He can't find me, anyhow."

The old man tried to talk him out of the idea, but Slim was determined, and finally Muller, in admiration of his spirit, said:

"Vell, if you vill go, you vill. Vun man can hide besser as two, but der Shine must go mit you as far as Dodge."

That was the only arrangement he would consent to, and while the Slim didn't want the Shine, and I myself couldn't see what good he could do, Muller insisted so strong that we all gave in.

WE WENT down to the yards that night to see them off, and the old man had a private confab with the Shine. The only time I ever saw Muller show any feeling was when he told the boy good-by. I guess he really liked him.

The two hid back of a pile of ties, a place where the trains slowed down, and me and Muller got off a distance and watched them. We could see Soupbone standing on top of a box-car as the train went by, and he looked like a tall devil. He was trying to watch both sides of the train at the same time, but I didn't think he saw either Slim or the Shine as they shot underneath the cars, one after the other, and nailed the rods. Then the train went off into the darkness, Soupbone standing up straight and stiff.

We went back to our camp to sleep, and the next morning before we were awake, the Shine came limping in, covered with blood and one arm hanging at his side.

I didn't have to hear his story to guess what had happened. Soupbone made them at the first stop. He hadn't expected two, but he did look for the kid. Instead of warning him off, he told him to get on top where he'd be safe. That was one of his old tricks. He didn't get to the Shine, who dodged off into the darkness, as soon as he found they were grabbed, and then caught the train after it started again. He crawled up between the cars to the deck, to tip the Slim off to watch out for Soupbone. Slim didn't suspect anything, and was thanking Soupbone, and explaining about his mother.

The moment the train got under way good, Soupbone says:

"Now my pretty boy, you're such a —— good traveler, let's see you jump off this train!"

The kid thought he was joshing, but there wasn't no josh about it. Soup pulled a gun. The Shine, with his own gun in hand, crawled clear on top and lay flat on the cars, trying to steady his aim on Soupbone. The kid was pleading and almost crying, when Soupbone suddenly jumped at him, smashed him in the jaw with the gun-barrel, and knocked him off the train. The Shine shot Soupbone in the back, and he dropped on top of the train, but didn't

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roll off. As the Shine was going down between the cars again, Soupbone shot at him and broke his arm. He got off all right, and went back down the road to find the kid dead—his neck broke.

OLD man Muller, the mildest man in the world generally, almost went bug-house when he heard that spiel. He raved and tore around like a sure enough nut. I've known him to go backing out of a town with every man in his mob down on the ground, dead or dying, and not show half as much feeling afterward. You'd 'a' thought the kid was his own. He swore he'd do nothing else as long as he lived until he'd cut Soupbone's heart out.

The Shine had to get out of sight, because Soupbone would undoubtedly have some wild-eyed story to tell about being attacked by hoboes and being shot by one. We had no hope but what the Shine had killed him.

Old man Muller went into town and found out that was just what had happened, and he was in the hospital only hurt a little. He also found they'd brought Slim's body to town, and that most people suspected the real truth, too. He told them just how it was, especially the railroad men, and said the Shine had got out of the country. He also wired Slim's people, and we heard afterward they sent a special train after the remains.

Muller was told, too, that the train conductor had notified Pew to let Slim ride, and that the rest of the train-crew had served notice on Pew that if he threw the boy off he'd settle with them for it. And that was just what made Soupbone anxious to get the kid. It ended his railroad career there, as we found out afterward, because he disappeared as soon as he got out of the hospital.

Meantime me and Muller and the Shine went ahead with that job, and it failed. Muller and the nigger got grabbed, and I had a tough time getting away. Just before we broke camp the night before, however, Muller, who seemed to have a hunch that something was going to happen, called me and the Shine to him, and said, his voice solemn:

"I vant you poys to bromise me vun ting," he said. "If I don't get der chance myself, bromise me dot venefer you find Soubbone Bew, you vill kill him deat."

And we promised, because we didn't think we would ever be called on to make good.

Muller got a long jolt for the job; the Shine got a shorter one and escaped a little bit later on, while I left that part of the country.

A COUPLE of years later, on a bitter cold night, in a certain town that I won't name, there was five of us in the sneezer, held as suspects on a house prowl job that only one of us had anything to do with—I ain't mentioning the name of the one, either. They was me, Kid Mole, the old prize-fighter, a hophead named Squirt McCue, that you don't know, Jew Friend, a dip, and that same 'Frisco Shine. We were all in the bull-pen with a mixed assortment of drunks and vags. All kinds of prisoners was put in there over night. This pokey is down-stairs under the police station, not a million miles from the Missouri River, so if you think hard you can guess the place. We were walking around kidding the drunks, when a screw shoved in a long, tall guy who acted like he was drunk or nutty, and was hardly able to stand.

I took one flash at his map, and I knew him. It was Pew.

He flopped down in a corner as soon as the screw let go his arm. The Shine rapped to him as quick as I did, and officed Mole and the rest. They all knew of him, especially the Honey Grove business, as well as about the Manchester Slim, for word had gone over the country at the time.

As soon as the screw went up-stairs I walked over to the big stiff, laying all huddled up, and poked him with my foot.

"What's the matter with you, you big cheese?" I said. He only mumbled.

"Stand up!" I tells him, but he didn't stir. The Shine and Mole got hold of him on either side and lifted him to his feet. He was as limber as a wet bar-towel. Just then we heard the screw coming down-stairs and we got away from Pew. The screw brought in a jag—a laughing jag—a guy with his snoot full of booze and who laughed like he'd just found a lot of money. He was a little, thin fellow, two pounds lighter than a straw hat. He laughed high and shrill, more like a scream than a real laugh, and the moment the screw opened the door and tossed him in, something

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struck me that the laugh was phoney. It didn't sound on the level.

There wasn't no glad in it. The little guy laid on the floor and kicked his feet and kept on laughing. Soupbone Pew let out a yell at the sight of him.

"Don't let him touch me!" he bawled, rolling over against the wall. "Don't let him near me!"

"Why, you big stiff, you could eat him alive!" I says.

The jag kept on tee-heeing, not looking at us, or at Pew either for that matter.

"He's nuts," said Jew Friend.

"Shut him off," I told the Shine.

He stepped over and picked the jag up with one hand, held him out at arm's length, and walloped him on the jaw with his other hand. The jag went to sleep with a laugh sticking in his throat. Soupbone still lay against the wall moaning, but he saw that business all right, and it seemed to help him. The Shine tossed the jag into a cell. Right after that the screw came down with another drunk, and I asked him about Pew.

"Who's this boob?" I said. "Is he sick?"

"Him? Oh, he's a good one," said screw. "He only killed his poor wife—beat her to death with his two big fists, because she didn't have supper ready on time, or something important. That ain't his blood on him; that's hers. He's pretty weak, now, hey? Well, he wasn't so weak a couple of hours ago, the rat! It's the wickedest murder ever done in this town, and he'll hang sure, if he ain't lynched beforehand!"

He gave Soupbone a kick as he went out, and Soupbone groaned.

Said I: "It's got to be done, gents; swing or no swing, this guy has got to go. Who is it—me?"

"Me!" said the Shine, stepping forward.

"Me!" said the Jew.

"Me!" chimed in Mole.

"All of us!" said the hophead.

"Stand him up!" I ordered.

The lights had been turned down low, and it was dark and shadowy in the jail. The only sound was the soft pad-pad of people passing through the snow on the sidewalks above our heads, the low sizzing of the water-spout at the sink, and the snores of the drunks, who were all asleep.

Us five was the only ones awake. The Shine and Mole lifted Soupbone up, and this time he was not so limp. He seemed to know that something was doing. His eyes was wide open and staring at us.

"Pew," I said in a whisper, "do you remember the kid you threw off your rattler three years ago?"

"And shot me in the arm?" asked Shine.

Pew couldn't turn any whiter, but his eyes rolled back into his head.

"Don't!" he whispered. "Don't say that. It made me crazy! I'm crazy now! I was crazy when I killed that little girl tonight. It was all on account of thinking about him. He comes to see me often."

"Well, Pew," I said, "a long time back you were elected to die. I was there when the sentence was passed, and it'd been carried out a long time ago if you hadn't got away. I guess we'll have to kill you tonight."

"Don't, boys!" he whined. "I ain't fit to die! Don't hurt me!"

"Why, you'll swing anyway!" said Friend.

"No! My God, no!" he said. "I was crazy; I'm crazy now, and they don't hang crazy people!"

I was standing square in front of him. His head had raised a little as he talked and his jaw was sticking out. I suddenly made a move with my left hand, as though to slap him, and he showed that his mind was active enough by dodging, so that it brought his jaw out further, and he said, "Don't." Then I pulled my right clear from my knee and took him on the point of the jaw. The Shine and Mole jumped back. Soupbone didn't fall; he just slid down in a heap, like his body had melted into his shoes.

We all jumped for him at the same time, but an idea popped into my head, and I stopped them. Soupbone was knocked out, but he was coming back fast. You can't kill a guy like that by hitting him. The jail was lighted by a few incandescent lights, and one of them was hung on a wire that reached down from the ceiling over the sink, and had a couple of feet of it coiled up in the middle. Uncoiled, the light would reach clear to the floor. I pointed to it, but the bunch didn't get my idea right away. The switch for the lights was inside the bull-pen, and I turned them off. I had to work fast for fear the screw

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upstairs would notice the lights was out and come down to see what the trouble was. A big arc outside threw a little glim through the sidewalk grating, so I could see what I was doing.

I uncoiled the wire and sawed it against the edge of the sink, close to the lamp, until it came in two. Then I bared the wire back for a foot. The gang tumbled, and carried Pew over to where the wire would reach him. I unfastened his collar, looped the naked end of the wire around his neck and secured it. By this time he was about come to, but he didn't seem to realize what was going on.

All but me got into their cells and I stepped over and turned the switch-button just as Pew was struggling to his feet. The voltage hit him when he was on all fours. He stood straight up, stiff, like a soldier at salute. There was a strange look on his face—a surprised look. Then, as though some one had hit him from behind, his feet left the floor and he swung straight out to the length of the wire and it broke against his weight, just as I snapped off the current. Pew dropped to the floor and curled up like a big singed spider, and a smell like frying bacon filled the room.

I went over and felt of his heart. It was still beating, but very light.

"They ain't enough current," whispered Mole. "We got to do it some other way."

"Hang him wid de wire," said the Shine.

"Aw—nix!" spoke up the Jew. "I tell you that makes me sick—bumping a guy off that way. Hanging and electricity, see? That's combining them too much. Let's use the boot."

"It ain't fair, kind-a, that's a fact," whispered McCue. "It's a little too legal. The boot! Give him the boot!"

The voice of the screw came singing down the stairs:

"Is that big guy awake?"

"Yes," I shouted back, "we're all awake; he won't let us sleep."

"Tell him he'd better say his prayers!" yelled the screw. "I just got word a mob is forming to come and get him!"

"Let him alone," I whispered to the gang. Mole was making a noose of the wire, and the Shine had hunted up a bucket to stand Pew on. They drew back and Soupbone lay stretched out on the floor.

I went over and felt of his heart again. I don't remember whether I felt any beat or not. I couldn't have said I did, at the moment, and I couldn't say I didn't. I didn't have time to make sure, because suddenly there run across the floor something that looked to me like a shadow, or a big rat. Then the shrill laugh of that jag rattled through the bull-pen. He slid along half stooped, as quick as a streak of light, and before we knew what was doing he had pounced on Soupbone and had fastened his hands tight around the neck of the big stiff. He was laughing that crazy laugh all the time.

"I'll finish him for you!" he squeaked. He fastened his hands around Soupbone's neck. I kicked the jag in the side of the head as hard as I could, but it didn't phase him. The bunch laid hold of him and pulled, but they only dragged Soupbone all over the place. Finally the jag let go and stood up, and we could see he wasn't no more drunk than we was. He let loose that laugh once more, and just as the Shine started the bucket swinging for his head, he said: "I'm her brother!" Then he went down kicking.

WE WENT into our cells and crawled into our bunks. Soupbone lay outside. The Shine pulled the jag into a corner. I tell you true, I went to sleep right away. I thought the screw would find out when he brought the next drunk down, but it so happened that there wasn't no more drunks and I was woke up by a big noise on the stairs. The door flew open with a bang, and a gang of guys came down, wild-eyed and yelling. The screw was with them and they had tight hold of him.

"Keep in, you men!" he bawled to us.

"That's your meat!" he said to the gang, pointing at what had been Soupbone. The men pounced on him like a lot of hounds on to a rabbit, and before you could bat an eye they had a rope around Soupbone's neck and was tearing up the stairs again, dragging him along.

They must have thought he was asleep; they never noticed that he didn't move a muscle himself, and they took the person of Soupbone Pew, or anyways what had been him, outside and hung it over a telegraph wire.

We saw it there when we was sprung next morning. When the screw noticed the blood around the bull-pen, he said:

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"Holy smoke, they handled him rough!" And he never knew no different.

If the mob hadn't come—but the mob did come, and so did the laughing jag. I left him that morning watching the remains of Soupbone Pew.

"She was my sister," he said to me.

I don't know for certain whether we killed Soupbone, whether the jag did it, or whether the mob finished him; but he was dead, and he ought to have died. Sometimes I wonder a bit about it, but no ghosts come to me, like I say, so I can't tell.

They's an unmarked grave in the potter's field of this town I speak of, and once in a while I go there when I'm passing through and meditate on the sins of Soupbone Pew. But I sleep well of nights. I done what had to be done, and I close my eyes and I don't never see Soupbone Pew.

HE TURNED once more to gazing out of the window.

"Well, what is there about condemned men to make you so nervous?" I demanded.

"I said some condemned men," he replied, still gazing. "Like this guy next door.

A loud, shrill laugh rang through the corridors.

"He's that same laughing jag," said Chicago Red.

MR. C. I. NUTT'S full name was Coriolanus Isaac Nutt. A sacrilegious world considered it humorous to refer to him, behind his back, as Cast Iron Nutt. The traducers pretended that the name was a tribute to the power, not to say density, of his head. The real reason, however, lay in envy. Mr. Nutt was rich—very, very rich.

Mankind's jibes served only, like dams, to accelerate the torrent of his philanthropy. He loved mankind despite mankind's frantic objection. Desperate communities resisted him in vain. Mr. Nutt's sanitary art galleries and model tenement-house parlors were installed in their midst by main force. They made his name a household word, if not an expletive, throughout the length and breadth of an ungrateful country. Every gift that he administered to an individual or a community had riveted to it an artistic metal plate with his name on it.

Mr. Nutt had not been a philanthropist always. His passionate, hot, bright days of youth had been devoted to saving money. Money, being heavy, is at the bottom of

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life's whirlpool, and Mr. Nutt went down there, wasting no time in observations of the frivolous rainbow bubbles and other vanities that swam near the top.

When he emerged from the whirlpool he was too busy bringing his hoard to land to contemplate the whirlpool and philosophize about it.

Therefore, when Mr. Nutt at last had leisure to indulge in the fine arts of thinking and reading, his strength of mind was as good as new, and he produced entirely original and unique thoughts with such rapidity that he became one of the volunteer thinkers for the nation.

The greater part of his great wealth had come from the manufacture of refined cast-iron statuary for the lawn and parlor. His intuition had led him to it; and it proved to be the very thing to still the vague art-hunger of the people.

It was none other than Mr. Nutt—C. I. Nutt of Pottsburgh—who created the famous and justly popular art-fountains with cast-iron gentlemen, in cast-iron frock-coats and cast-iron high hats, under cast-iron umbrellas that spouted water from their tops. It was Mr. Nutt who gave to a hushed world the imaginative, yet realistic, garden art of cast-iron little girls in blue and white enameled pinafores, peering like real life from the shrubbery.

During Mr. Nutt's ascendancy in native art, no man dreamed of buying an ancestral home without stocking it thoroughly with Mr. Nutt's eminent metallic persons and anatomically correct beasts. Every respectable driveway was flanked by at least two of Mr. Nutt's thoughtful lions. Near every pretentious doorway there lay or sat a noble iron mastiff.

Cast-iron stags, cast-iron goddesses, cast-iron dolphins and winged steeds were demanded so insatiably that Mr. Nutt became the Cast-Iron King of America in a very few years. But the fitful fancy of the public turned from him suddenly, having been caught by the insidious temptations of Italian gardens. The best hand-picked lawns were torn up. Nothing was spared. Even the most expensive floral beds in harp and anchor designs were destroyed. Terraces and pergolas arose over night.

The vandalism did not spare Mr. Nutt's creations. The best cast-iron statuary was removed to make room for white marble and plaster figures. It outraged Mr. Nutt's business sense; but still more did it outrage his moral sense. No goddess or anybody else ever had left his works without being fully dressed from head to foot.

"What's going to become of the young in this broad land of ours?" he inquired reproachfully. "If those persons were flesh and blood, they wouldn't be let stand around by the police! And look at the swindle! Eleven in every assorted dozen of those statues are shy of arms or legs or even heads. The works that turn 'em out that way save thousands on thousands of pounds of material, that's what! Do you know how many tons of iron I could have saved by leaving off limbs or clothes from my output? But the motto of the C. I. Nutt Iron Monumental and Art Works was and will be: 'Put in every ounce of cast-iron that's needed to make the subject true to life and decent.' "

He fought vigorously with tongue, pen and type against the intruding immoralities. He electrified the country by sending to all the Sunday-schools little photographs of chaste cast-iron statuary with verses invented entirely by himself:

> How terrible it is to gaze
> On statues of the heathen days!
> Oh, give to us the tasty art
> That springs from our own native heart,
> Where everything is pure and good
> And wears its clothing as it should!

The unassuming but inspired lines appealed to many thousands whose souls had remained pure. A loyal band formed the "Society for Protecting Virtuous Arts" and elected Mr. Nutt president. But all these efforts could only check, not stop, the madness, and Mr. Nutt saw it, with the eye of a captain of finance. He gave up the fight and set his works to the manufacture of sad-irons. While pure art flourished, they had been merely a by-product of his statuary. A slight change enabled him to convert all his monument shops into sad-iron shops. Before long he was making more money than ever.

Mr. Nutt, however, had tasted the delights of public service during his battle for purity in art. Sad-irons did not satisfy his soaring soul, nor did their manufacture demand the constant thought, the creative genius, the poetical fancy that his statuary had demanded. Mr. Nutt threw himself body and soul into the work of reform and philanthropy.

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He threw himself head over heels into the study of literature, also. He became a master of sociology, chemistry, religion and the drama. He propounded a theory of government and formed an association to teach the agriculturist how to plant. He designed and gave away hen-houses calculated to elevate the ethical sense of poultry. Once a week he went into the abodes of the poor and lectured on the science of perfectly correct living.

He devoted the profits of six months' fevered output of sad-irons to publishing the great edition of "Purified Literature," in which all the masterpieces of poetry, story and drama were produced lavishly, with all improprieties and harmful doctrines altered or cut out by specialists without regard to expense.

The advanced thinkers flocked around him and acclaimed him leader. They made him honorary member of everything, from housewife societies to committees on regulating aerial warfare.

It was thus that Mr. Nutt became interested, one day, in a tremendously advanced project to found an "Experimental Colony of Thinkers."

AND it was thus that he found himself on board the *Flying Squid* with a small but highly intelligent band, bound for the Antilles, where he had bought an island for the purpose of demonstrating how mankind should live, and how his theory of government would work out.

He looked around the cabin of the schooner with pride, noting the thoughtful brows and eyes of genius that surrounded him. They showed the deference and admiration due to an honored chief who paid bills. "Ladies and gentlemen," said he, "this is an epoch in civilization."

"You will be immortal as another Columbus, Mr. Nutt," announced a stout, motherly lady. "He only gave the world a new continent. You will give it a new existence."

"A thought! A thought!" exclaimed a gentleman with smoked glasses. "How wonderful is your gift of expression, Miss Bisket! Perchance you will give humanity a diadem of strophes, an epic about us—something that will beat with as divine a wing as your 'Heart-shrieks!' Ah!"

He tossed his hair back and repeated:

"I hear the wind in the pessimistic trees.
How beautiful is the world!"

Miss Bisket nodded approvingly. "You catch the spirit of my lines, Professor; you see their depth of meaning. So few do! Ah, well! It is not every day that the spirit descends on us poets and gives us soul-touches like that. Yet I may write something, something that will perhaps approach, though it may not equal, my humble 'Woman with the Egg-Beater.'"

"And you, Professor Gickel," said Mr. Nutt, "you, too, no doubt, will be inspired to write something that will arouse the people to knowledge of our great experiment. If you could give us something, now, like that great article of yours in the *Weekly Cataclysm*, eh?"

Professor Gickel thrust his white hand into the breast of his frock-coat and quoted:

"The time is on us when thinkers are not enslaved any longer by the slow processes of thought. We think ahead of ourselves, we think faster than our brains can work, we think things that are beyond thought, we have thoughts that can not be thought, we——"

The cataclysmic thinker was interrupted by the cataclysmic entrance of Miss Grool. "Mr. Nutt!" cried she. "Mr. Nutt! What does this mean? What kind of a ship is this? They have seized my secretary, my collaborator! Come up-stairs at once, please—at once!"

She snatched Mr. Nutt's coat-sleeve and urged him on deck. They came upon Mr. Bowsun holding the wriggling form of Henry Moses across his broad knee, while his still broader hand fell and rose rhythmically and methodically.

"You'll desert, eh?" remarked Mr. Bowsun, bringing his hand down. "And fill us with worry and sorrows, eh?" His hand went up. "And write lies about our croolty, eh?" His hand came down with mighty emphasis.

"What does this mean, my man?" demanded Mr. Nutt. "How dare you!"

Mr. Bowsun looked scornfully at Mr. Nutt, and calmly returned to his previous occupation.

"Where's the Captain?" bellowed the majestic Mr. Nutt.

Captain Moses came hurrying, pulling his little beard. "What's the matter, Bill?" asked he. "Why, it's Henry! Where did you get him?"

Mr. Bowsun let Henry slip to the deck and saluted with one hand while the other

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grasped his prisoner's ear fondly. "He come aboard with this here lady," said he, waving his paw at Miss Grool.

"This boy is a deserter," said Captain Moses mildly to Miss Grool and Mr. Nutt.

"He's my secretary!" responded Miss Grool fiercely. "Let him go this minute!"

"Your secretary!" answered Mr. Bowsun. "A little liar, that's what he is! Filled you up with lies about us, he did, so that we can't look a newspaper in the face!" In his emotion his hand pressed Henry's ear convulsively.

"I didn't ever mention your name or nothin'!" howled Henry.

"No, he didn't!" snapped Miss Grool. "I don't know your names even now. I don't even know the name of your old ship. Where's Captain Hawser that brought us here?"

"HERE, my hearties!" roared Captain Hawser, who had been holding his hand over his mouth and slapping his leg and otherwise giving expression to silent thoughts in the background. "Here I am, miss!"

"What do you know about this?" demanded Miss Grool.

"Be calm, miss, be calm," answered Captain Hawser paternally. "You see, you didn't make up your mind to join this—this expedition till only a few days ago, and I didn't have much time to tell you the name of this ship or anything about it. And then, too, I thought it would worry Henry, here, if you told him that you were going to sail on the *Flying Squid*. Henry is a sensitive boy, very sensitive. So I thought it best to just bring you and him aboard quiet and peaceable and let Henry meet Mr. Bowsun by surprise, like."

"Is this the ship you ran away from, Henry?" Miss Grool interrogated Henry, who was pinioned still by one ear. "You told me you ran away from a steamer."

Henry remained silent. His fertile mind had revolved many tales, but none seemed fitting for the situation.

"Yes, this is the ship," answered Captain Moses, frowning at the crew that was listening with all its sun-burned ears. "I'm his uncle, and everything he told you was a lie. He never was on any ship except this, and Mr. Bowsun and I, we treated him like a father—two fathers, I mean. He just up and invented all that stuff about the wrongs of sailors that you printed."

"Sailors!" growled Mr. Bowsun. "Wrongs! The only wrong is that they're treated too right! Get for'd, you swab, you!" He made a running leap and hooked each hand into the neck-band of a loitering sailor. "For'd!" said he, propelling them along the deck like quoits.

"That's the way you treat them, is it?" said Miss Grool indignantly. "I'd rather believe Henry than you—than the two of you! Come down-stairs, Henry."

"See here, ma'am," interposed Captain Moses, detaining the youth. "I can't have discipline on my ship that way. This boy deserted and, now we've got him again, he's got to go back to his duty, and you mustn't interfere."

Miss Grool gasped. She turned to Mr. Nutt. "Show this man his place!" said she. "He must be mad!"

"My dear fellow," remarked Mr. Nutt with dignity to Captain Moses, "the lady is right. This young gentleman is her secretary, and you mustn't annoy him."

Bill Bowsun's mouth opened in helpless astonishment. Captain Moses made a jump toward Mr. Nutt. Captain Hawser hastily exchanged a delighted smile for an expression of severe dignity and stepped between them. "One moment, Cap'n Moses," said he. "Come below, Mr. Nutt. Come below, Miss Grool. Let's settle this where the sailors can't hear." As they went reluctantly toward the cabin gangway, he whispered to Mr. Bowsun: "Let up on Henry till I talk to those cranks. I'll fix things."

WHEN A. B. Hawser, Master, retired, came on deck again, he was wiping a reddened face violently with his handkerchief. "Look here, Moses, my boy," said he, "you know what these passengers of ours are. They won't listen to reason. Now I vote that you give Henry up to 'em. Otherwise, they'll expect us to put about and take 'em all ashore again, and you'll have the devil's own time with 'em. Give in to 'em."

"What!" bellowed Bill Bowsun. "Who's running this ship? Cap'n Moses and me, or that there Miss Porridge? Mebbe you'd like for that there Monkey-wrench or Nut or wotever he is to skipper the *Flying Squid*, too! I'm surprised at you, Cap'n Hawser,

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a man like you wot's lived a respectable life at sea!"

Captain Hawser swung his massive right arm and assaulted Mr. Bowsun's back with an affectionate violence that nearly shook the whole schooner. "Your feelings do you credit, Bill, credit," said he, "and if it was a matter of principle, I'd say 'Stick to it' even if you had to throw the whole cargo of passengers overboard. But this isn't a matter of principle, because Henry, you see, hasn't got any principle."

Mr. Bowsun reflected suspiciously over this sophistry.

"I don't like it, Hawser," said Captain Moses. "I never saw good come yet from giving a passenger anything. So far as Henry's concerned, I don't care much. We'll have him when we return, and then I'll bring him up the way he should go."

"That's it, that's it," said A. B. Hawser cheerfully. "D'ye hear, Bill? You bide your time till the return voyage."

Mr. Bowsun muttered something rude. Captain Moses pulled his beard and listened to Mr. Hawser. Presently he nodded and said: "All right! But Henry'd better keep out of Bill's way. I give him that advice as a man and as an uncle."

Again Mr. Bowsun muttered something rude; but he added hastily: "Orders is orders, even—even if they're—" he coughed, and walked to the wheel, where he spoke violently to the helmsman.

The Experimental Colony of Thinkers was not a colony of sailors. It was unfortunate for Henry. His protectors lay in their cabins, too deeply occupied with themselves to care about his troubles. So, for two days while they were seasick, Henry spent his time hiding in more or less inaccessible corners from Mr. Bowsun.

"Think of something else whenever you see him," Captain Hawser advised the Mate, observing his troubled spirit.

"I do, I do," responded Mr. Bowsun. "But the 'something else' is always something else that I remember reading in that there newspaper, and then there ain't nothin' left exceptin' to try and get my hands on him."

WHEN Mr. Nutt and Miss Grool and Miss Bisket and the rest of the Thinkers recovered at last from their seasickness and formed a reserve to which he could retreat, Henry served out retribution to Mr. Bowsun by treating him with superior calm, mingled with equal portions of haughty indifference and kindly contempt, and spiced with a liberal dash of sarcastic merriment. It made a dressing that embittered Bill Bowsun's salad of life.

He had his Captain's companionship in pain. Henry addressed Captain Moses as a social equal, and fell into the practise of making patronizing remarks to him about the navigation of the vessel.

"Did you hear him? Did you hear that cub?" sputtered Captain Moses to Captain Hawser after one of these flying interviews. "Said to me, the little scoundrel, 'You're making a very good course, Captain, very good!' Hawser, I can't stand that sort of thing much longer! And the crew is getting infected. There's that Miss Gruel—spite of all I can do, she talks to the man at the wheel, and to every man that happens to come aft for any bit o' duty. Why, we'll have a mutiny on hand next, that's what we'll have!"

Captain Hawser rubbed his large brown nose thoughtfully. "I don't blame you, Moses, my boy," he replied. "I knew that I was taking on a pretty mean bill of lading when I undertook to be a blamed chaperone and nurse to that parcel of lunatics, but even I didn't know what it meant. Why, there ain't a crazy idea in the world that ain't stowed away in one or another of those brains below! We're in for it now, though. And it's only a few days more. Just hold on and let 'em alone, and let's land 'em quick as we can."

"But you've got to stop that Gruel woman," insisted Captain Moses. "I can't have her tampering with the crew any more.'

"Stop her!" inquired Captain Hawser. "Stop her! Moses, how would you go about it? Tell me. I'd like to learn. She won't listen to language. You'd have to put her in irons, and you can't do that, you know."

A wild, strange, mournful sound struck their ears. They recognized the voice of Mr. Bowsun, and turned around to see him gazing with amazed eyes at a sailor. Again the weird wail came from his lips. He jumped at the man and bore him down.

"Here! Here! Stop that!" came another voice from the deck where the passengers were sitting. Mr. Nutt had jumped to his feet. "This won't do!" continued he.

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Bill Bowsun, with his hands in the sailor's collar, looked around in surprise so great that it partook of awe.

"Miss Grool has been telling me how you officers treat men aboard ships!" said Mr. Nutt majestically.

"They daren't say their souls are their own," Miss Grool spoke for herself. "They tell me it's as much as their life is worth to come farther to the hind end of this ship than just so far. This man hasn't done anything. I've been watching."

"What!" roared Mr. Bowsun. "What! Hain't done nothin,' when he up and called me 'Bill' instead o' 'sir'?"

He shook the sailor with deep feeling. "What—did—you—mean—by—it—you—swab—hey?" he inquired.

"That—lady—says—as—we're—as—good—as—the—next—man," responded the sailor between shakes. "You—let—me—up—or—I'll—sue—you!"

Bill Bowsun was so overcome that he released the sailor and tottered. He glared in helpless appeal at Captain Moses.

Captain Moses hurled himself at the sailor, grasped him by the neck and the waistband, ran forward with him as if he were a hand-truck, hurled him into a tangle of cables at the bow, snatched blindly at something that was standing nearby and threw it over him. It was a bucket of slush.

"Brute!" screamed Miss Grool. "Frightful!" echoed Professor Gickel.

"Madam, you leave that man alone!" howled Captain Moses to Miss Bisket, who had hurried forward and was stooping over the man. "Get aft, you passengers, get aft!"

"We will not!" announced Mr. Nutt, joining the group at the forecastle. "I shall see that you are punished for assault when you return to port!"

Captain Moses replied, but his words were drowned by a great chorus of wrath and scorn that arose from the Thinkers.

Captain Moses stared around him like a man who sees a nightmare displayed before his waking eyes. Miss Honora Pip, the apostle of raw food, was looking at him as if he were on her menu. Mr. Reginald Dacksund, the scientific socialist, was shaking a beringed fist at him. The mouth of Mr. Vladimir Porki, the Philosopher of Negation, was opening and shutting, and though Captain Moses could not hear individual words in the clamor, his sharpened perceptions told him too clearly that the mouth was forming words of deeply offensive import.

"Slave-driver! Oppressor! Savage! Coliseum! Inquisition! Mohawk! Tartar! Beast! Nero!"

It was wonderful how many words the passengers coined without taking breath.

Bill Bowsun, circulating around the outside of the group, listened with shocked ears. Even Captain Hawser lost his cheery air and became the ship-master, affrighted, astounded and enraged at a scene that was nothing short of sacrilege on the deck of a ship.

"Scatter the crew and set 'em to work, Bill," he gasped, "and don't be too affectionate about it, and I'll get these lunatics aft somehow and try to knock some reason into 'em."

He bore into the crowd and pushed, coaxed, squeezed, pleaded, and otherwise urged them to the stern. There he labored with his charges, striving to keep his anger down below his Adam's apple, a struggle that threatened to choke him at frequent intervals.

"See here, ladies and gentlemen," said he, wiping his forehead, "if a sailor don't say 'sir' to his officer, he's doing it because he wants to make trouble. And if the officer takes it, he'll have to take worse next time. Why, on most ships, if a foremast hand didn't say 'sir,' he'd be knocked down and punched and dragged along the deck by every officer near him. Now you don't see any knocking down and punching here. All that Mr. Bowsun does is to shake a man and run him for'd. But you'll see worse than punching if you don't leave the officers of this vessel to handle their men. You'll see a mutiny—and that means blood; for Captain Moses is responsible for your safety, and if his crew doesn't obey him at the word, it may mean shipwreck. In the name of heaven, did you ever see a mutiny? Do ye know what it means aboard a ship, all alone in the middle of the sea, with only a couple of officers against a whole gang of strong men?"

"My good fellow," responded Mr. Nutt severely, "you are simply repeating to us the cant of vanished ages. You may believe it—I'll give you the credit of saying that I think you do believe it. But you are wrong. No man should be treated as less than an equal. Give a man justice, and

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he'll do you justice, never fear. So we'll have no knocking about on board this ship while I am a passenger on it. And Miss Grool will continue to uplift the men, and show them their chances for a higher life, elevate them to men instead of slaves, and teach them to uphold their rights!"

Miss Grool nodded her head affirmatively. "Indeed I will!" said she. "If I were a sailor, I'd mutiny myself. I'm not going to let any man, no matter who, abridge my God-given liberty, or turn me from the clear and definite course of my duty. I shall continue to teach these down-trodden men their rights!"

Captain Hawser began another argument; but he looked around at the intellectual faces that surrounded him, and he turned away in silence. Silently he lit a pipe; silently he looked overside. He did not break silence even when Henry Moses sauntered by him and said serenely: "Well, Hawser, how goes it?" Suddenly, however, his face began to clear. "By George!" he muttered. Again he reflected. Little wrinkles of joy came around his eyes. He slapped his leg. "I've got it!" said he.

BRISKLY he rolled to the quarter-deck and whispered long and earnestly to Captain Moses. Gradually the face of Captain Moses, like a headland catching the sun, caught the joyful expression that beamed from the face of Captain Hawser. He chuckled, and the two mariners poked each other in the ribs. "Not a word to Bill, mind ye!" concluded Captain Hawser. "Poor chap! He'll have his troubles, but he'll forgive us afterward."

"He'll have his troubles right away," said Captain Moses, pointing amidships where the gentleman who had been treated to the slush-bucket was being ministered to by Miss Grool. She was addressing him energetically, and emphasizing her remarks by hammering her left hand with her clenched right. Captain Hawser gurgled. "That woman," said he, "has a fine eye for mischief. She couldn't tackle a man in the crew that's more ready for trouble. He's one of those sea-lawyers."

The fruit of Miss Grool's gardening fell on the astonished head of Bill Bowsun within an hour, when the gentleman of the slush-bucket responded, in reply to an order, that he was busy just then on something else. Mr. Bowsun immediately hurled himself at the sailor, and dragged him aft before Captain Moses.

Then he had the greatest shock of his life.

Captain Moses listened, pulled his little beard, glanced around at the passengers who were all attention, and said to Mr. Bowsun mildly:

"Well, Mr. Bowsun, I'm afraid you're too impatient with the men. The passengers don't like it. Try and see what politeness will do."

Mr. William Bowsun, First Mate and part owner of the *Flying Squid*, was a strong man in excellent health. Never in his life had he fainted. But he nearly fainted then.

Captain Moses retired hastily. Mr. Bowsun looked upward at heaven, as if appealing for help. Failing to find it, he turned to the sailor. He tried to speak, but words would not come. Feebly he waved his hand. The sailor smiled affably and sauntered away.

He had gone only a few feet, when, finding that he was not pursued, a great, dazzling thought struck him. He paused, stuffed a clay pipe, scratched a match on the sacred mast, and began to smoke on the sacred deck. He was not struck dead; and another thought came to him. He began to whistle. Whistling and smoking, despite the inordinate difficulty of doing both things thoroughly well at the same time, he strolled forward to where his awestruck shipmates were standing.

When Bill Bowsun recovered the use of his limbs, he precipitated himself down the companionway and into the Captain's stateroom. Breathlessly he poured forth remarks that would have stung any man of noble mind; but the ignoble master of the *Flying Squid* only pulled his little beard and remained absolutely, stonily, ignobly silent. Mr. Bowsun turned to Captain Hawser, who was in the room. But Captain Hawser shook his head sadly and replied: "I'm merely a passenger, Mr. Bowsun, merely a passenger."

Bewildered and outraged, the Mate retreated to the deck again. He shouted an order to a sailor. Despite himself, his voice was lacking in its usual forceful volume, not to say bellow. The sailor obeyed, but he did it with a new and striking placidity of movement, and he looked at Bill with a face that had a strange expression, an expression unheard of, monstrous, in the

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face of a man before the mast. It expressed tolerating disdain.

Mr. Bowsun cast a look at the passengers, and reluctantly overcame his impulse to commit murder.

He had to overcome many succeeding impulses of the same nature during the rest of the day. The crew of the *Flying Squid* developed a talent bordering on genius for obeying commands just fast enough to avoid the charge of mutiny, and slowly enough to harrow Mr. Bowsun to the heart. They developed more than genius in facial expression, and each man showed Mr. Bowsun, with wonderful success, what he thought of him.

Mr. Bowsun's rage was changed to horror when Captain Moses prefixed the word "please" to an order that he gave to a sailor. After that, Mr. Bowsun walked the deck of the schooner like a lost soul. He felt that nothing could happen to arouse any further emotions in him. He was as one who had seen the end of the world.

As one stunned by great anguish, he looked without a word at the unwonted spectacle of the passengers mingling with the sailors and conversing with them that evening. He made no remonstrance when Miss Grool said to the helmsman, in his hearing: "We are all free and equal; and the time will come soon when all ranks will be leveled. It is every good man's duty to help that time along by opposing tyranny at every opportunity."

Mr. Bowsun felt his great legs give way under him.

FOR three days the *Flying Squid*, blown by the steady wind of southern latitudes, kept steadily on her course. For three days the crew luxuriated in the rights of man. For three days Captain Moses fled ignobly whenever Mr. Bowsun, desperate, appealed to him.

At last the Mate gave it up. A dozen times he had heard his Captain say "please" to the men before the mast. He decided that Captain Julius Moses had gone insane.

Hour by hour the crew became more airy in demeanor and more reluctant to work. The word "sir" had vanished utterly from their vocabulary. They handled ropes as if they were dangerous snakes, and they promenaded the deck like men long and hopelessly weary.

On the morning of the fourth day Captain Moses appeared on deck early. He lingered till there arose far on the horizon a faint, vague cloud lying on the sea. As soon as the hail: "Land o-o-o-h!" came from the bows, he hurried below, and emerged again with Captain Hawser.

The *Flying Squid* sailed on till the land was clear to behold. "Now!" whispered Captain Hawser.

The next moment Mr. William Bowsun got the second great shock of his life.

Captain Moses howled forth an order. There was no "please" in front of it. Before the crew could stir, he jumped among them, seized a man and threw him to the deck, shouting: "Mutiny, will ye? Lend a hand here, Hawser! Take that chap! Give it to 'em, Mr. Bowsun!"

With a loud, long cry of uncontrollable joy, Mr. Bowsun threw himself on the sailors. For five passionately happy minutes the deck of the *Flying Squid* was an arena, wherein heroic deeds were done. At the end of that time the crew was crowded forward, astonished beyond comprehension, and bearing bruises that pained them beyond endurance.

Their little Captain roared orders at them as swiftly as he could invent them. The men were too dumfounded to obey.

"Mutiny! Mutiny!" shouted the Captain. To an unprejudiced observer his voice was not the voice that might be expected to come from a shipmaster whose vessel is menaced. It was the voice of a long-suffering man suddenly delighted.

The sailors of the *Flying Squid* were not unprejudiced observers. Besides, they got no time for making observations. At the word: "Mutiny!" Captain Hawser leaped at them, so did Captain Moses, so did Bill Bowsun. Again there was a revelry of war.

Then deep peace fell suddenly on the *Flying Squid*. The crew was tumbled, thrown and shoved into the forecastle, the hatch slid to, and Captain Moses looked victoriously around a deck deserted save for the helmsman and two sailors, who were in the grasp of Bill Bowsun and Captain Hawser, and promising humbly to obey orders under the pressing inducement of hands like garrotes.

The noise had brought the passengers on deck. Captain Moses rushed at them. "Quick! Quick!" he shouted. "You'll have to man the ship, or we'll be ashore!

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The crew has mutinied, and I've got to press you into service!"

He wiped blood from his mouth, with an ostentatiously crimson handkerchief.

Captain Hawser appeared aft with a countenance ensanguined so thoroughly that Miss Bisket swooned. He was ungallant enough to let her, and did not try to explain that he had rubbed the blood over himself from a little gash.

Bill appeared then to crown the work. His shirt was torn into tatters, his right arm was red, his nose was gorgeous, his eyes were puffed.

"Only two men and the helmsman remain loyal!" gasped Mr. Hawser to Mr. Nutt. "I told you what would happen! They jumped us as soon as they saw land! But there's no time to talk—no time for breakfast or anything! Go below, ladies! The gentlemen will have to help us sail the ship. We'll show you the ropes. We're in the midst of reefs, and we've got to work for our lives!"

The morning was hot, furnishing an affidavit of a hot day to come. The sea flashed back every ray of heat that happened to miss the devoted deck of the *Flying Squid*. Through the quivering morning, and through the blistering noon, and through the throbbing afternoon, the unfortunate passengers of the *Flying Squid* toiled incessantly at ropes and spars and sails.

It was intricate navigation. The schooner did not hold any given course long enough to give the toilers time for breath. A nautical person might have wondered, for the breeze was dead astern. If he knew the coast, he would have wondered more. But the Thinkers were not nautical and they did not know the coast. They labored for their lives, while the *Flying Squid* beat and reached and zigzagged, picking her dangerous way through a sea that was not more than a thousand feet deep anywhere.

All the time they gazed longingly at the island—or rather, they snatched glances at it in the intervals between working for their lives. All the time the island seemed near and yet so far, for though the *Flying Squid* sailed like mad, it approached the land only by painfully slow degrees.

IT WAS now that Henry Moses began to suspect dimly that perhaps he had been unwise in patronizing his ex-superiors. By the kindly forethought of Captain Moses and Captain Hawser, he had been placed under the immediate command of Mr. Bowsun. And Mr. Bowsun bestowed on his labors an amount of painstaking thought and paternal solicitude that made Henry Moses realize how much work can be performed even by the most unwilling, when a stronger mind (and hand) control one's destinies.

What added to his displeasure most heavily was his discovery that the only persons who were working were himself and the passengers. Mr. Bowsun busied himself only in giving a practically uninterrupted flow of orders. Captain Moses and Mr. Hawser sat under the shadow of the deck-house, smoking comfortably, and scanning a chart with every manifestation of great anxiety.

However, Henry did not have much time to brood. When he was not working at ropes and rigging, he was busy stewarding. Captain Hawser had explained to the improvised crew that the *Flying Squid* was in too dangerous a position to give any one time for meals; and the passengers were fed hurriedly, and not over attentively, at their posts by Henry.

The blistering afternoon blistered its way toward the west at last. Captain Hawser, squinting over the half-dead Thinkers, said to Captain Moses:

"We'd better get in now, Moses, and anchor, wouldn't we? Don't you think they've got enough?"

"No, I don't!" responded Captain Moses with regrettable vindictiveness. "I'll tell you what let's do. Tell 'em that before we can anchor we've got to have a lot of the cargo taken out and re-stowed, so we can get at the chain-locker. That'll keep 'em busy for a few hours."

Captain Hawser showed frank admiration. "By George, Moses," he chuckled, "that's a new way of anchoring! But it'll be fine. I want to see that Nutt get callouses on his hands."

"My only regret is that I can't make that Gruel woman and that fat poet-woman work, too," responded Captain Moses viciously, "but I'll take it out of Professor Gickel and the rest."

Captain Hawser rolled to the unhappy crew of the *Flying Squid* and explained to them what was to be done. With strange lack of diplomacy, he enlarged on the magnitude of the coming task, and implored the

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suffering men to brace up for a desperate effort.

"It'll be heavy work," said Captain Hawser, "but luckily you're all fresh and strong."

At these words Professor Gickel looked at him piteously, sat down on the deck and broke helplessly into a great sob.

Mr. Dacksund's courage gave way when his great colleague thus confessed that matter had conquered mind. He, too, let himself sink to the planks, and groaned.

Mr. Nutt held out a pair of torn, dirty hands. "Fresh and strong!" he cried. "Look at us! Flesh and blood can bear no more! Can't you make the crew work?"

"Oh, yes!" replied Captain Moses. "We could. But I'm not going to let 'em out, thank you! You saw what they did to us. No, siree! We couldn't release 'em unless we had belaying-pins and clubs ready for 'em, in case they show fight. And, anyway, they wouldn't work without we could jump 'em if they didn't move lively. And, of course, that's out of the question, seeing you don't approve of it."

He looked inquiringly at Miss Grool and Miss Bisket, who had come on deck.

"Well, of course—" Miss Grool remarked thoughtfully.

"You ought to look out for us, somehow," said Miss Bisket.

"The crew is paid to work, and they ought to work as a mere matter of abstract justice," said Mr. Dacksund faintly.

"As between man and man," added Professor Gickel.

"Look here, Captain Moses," announced Mr. Nutt, examining his hands with immense pity, "look here! We can't go down in that hole and lift heavy stuff. We can't do it!" His voice ended in a despairing little squeak. He swallowed hard. Captain Moses made no reply.

"Do you mean to say," demanded Miss Grool, with a last attempt at scorn, "that you daren't let the crew out?"

"Do you want 'em to take the ship and —kill you, maybe?" asked Captain Hawser solemnly.

"We'd let 'em out quick enough, and make 'em work, too," declared Captain Moses, "if it wasn't for your feelings about 'em. As it is, you see, it's kinder to leave 'em locked up and do the work ourselves than it would be to let 'em out and club 'em till they know who's running this ship."

"You're sure that you'd have to club them?" asked Mr. Nutt sadly.

Captain Moses nodded.

Mr. Nutt patted his hands gently with his silk handkerchief. "Mutiny is a dreadful crime," he said thoughtfully. "I think we'd better go below and let you conquer the crew."

"With belaying-pins, handspikes and clubs?" demanded Mr. Bowsun eagerly.

Mr. Nutt nodded gloomily. Mr. Bowsun rushed forward. The Thinkers fled hastily below. Fifteen minutes afterward a crew of gentle and fond gazelles anchored the *Flying Squid* in the bay before the island. and shouted "sir" eagerly every time Mr. Bowsun looked their way.

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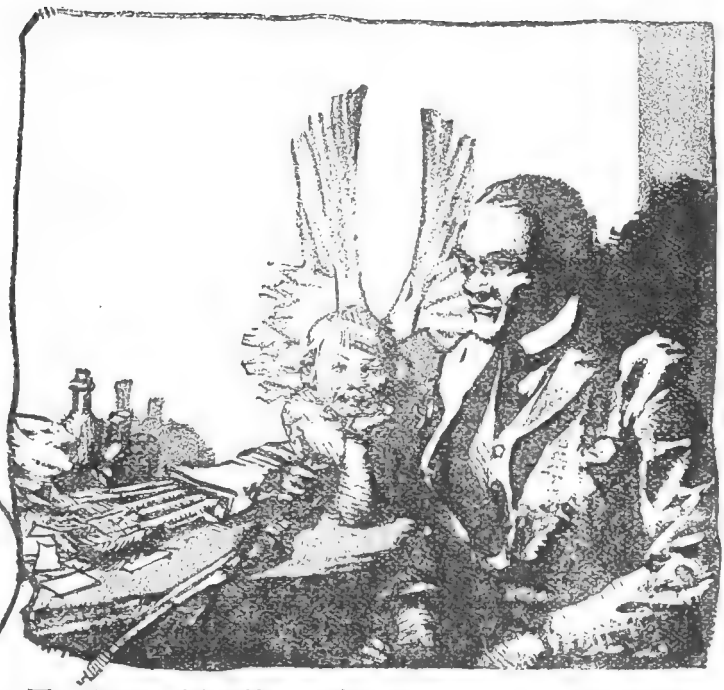
CUPID and the CROOK



by

John I Cochrane, M D
Author of "The Crook and the Doctor"

CHAPTER I

A MAN-HATER

LATE on a Fall afternoon in the nineties, in the operating-room of the old City Hospital on Blackwell's Island, the great Bowers was in full swing of his famous operation, and a score of country doctors watched him worshipfully. Some of the younger ones may have turned from the swift execution of the surgeon to stare at the Head Nurse at his side—to stare at the marvel of her fresh young beauty, and to stare in vain. But among them there was a man—he had entered late and unobserved with young Corbin, Resident at the Penitentiary—whose dangerous greenish eyes never left the girl's face, unless to follow the deft quickness of her hands at her work.

She was well worth watching; not so much for the perfection of her regular loveliness as for the bewildering swiftness and sure grace of her every movement. The operation once under way, the surgeon left the whole vital matter of surgical cleanliness to her, with a complete trust that left him all his faculties for his manipulation. For she was well known throughout the hospital world of New York—internes spoke of Helen Alden in a whisper.

Hers was the utter unconscious absorption of the true votary, the broad grasp and accurate skill of the great artist. If one had any knowledge of the work in hand, to see her in action was to thrill with wonder and admiration.

Her thorough comprehension of the surgeon's purpose, her unfailing readiness for each emergency, implied a long training almost impossible in one so young; while the deft accuracy of her manifold movements, their swift instinctive grace, taxed the eye to the utmost.

Now with one perfectly molded hand she caught and shielded a ligature carelessly swung too near a germ-teeming face, whisked away soiled instruments or sponges and spread fresh sterile towels under the surgeon's very hands without his knowledge; while with the other hand—a complete intelligence in itself—she anticipated his every need, supplying forceps, retractors,

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pads, sponges, needles, etc. At times she threaded needles or tied ligatures and sutures, even while his flashing hands were sewing, without an instant's interruption; more than once a quiet gesture called his attention to a flaw in his sterile technic itself, and he humbly thanked her in an undertone.

All and each of these thousand-and-one supplementary needed things she seemed to do with her subconsciousness. At the same time, with a tilt of dainty head or a lift of long lashes, she was directing three adoring assistants; who, with eyes fixed on her, flitted noiselessly to and from the sterilizers, filled hypodermics, poured brimming pitchers, wiped from the surgeon's heated face a drop that threatened the sacred "field," fetched and carried the host of things that could not be provided in advance.

Not one fact or possibility that environed the operation, no condition near or remote that could endanger its outcome, could escape her quiet alertness. And, for all the tremendous responsibility upon her beautiful shoulders, she was as cool and fresh as when the grueling work had begun, three hours before. In her silent unconscious mastery she was invincible. Sweet, proud-faced, serene and absorbed, she stood at her post through hours of racking tension—easily forestalling each new danger, and more alert as their number increased, more resourceful as her tasks multiplied; and in her cool, sweet hands lay the life of the helpless one on the table, safe as a babe at breast!

Hats off, Gentlemen!

TO CORBIN, living near by as he did, it was no new thing to watch Helen Alden at her work, but he never failed to fall under the spell of it. And to-day he turned his reverent eyes from the white mistress of this art of aggressive safety to the man at his side—this man who stood for all that was desperate and dangerous, whose very name whitened the lips of brave men, and as he saw the grim face soften, the merciless greenish eyes deepen with feeling, his reflections were of a deep humility.

The critical stage of the operation passed, Corbin touched the arm of the man beside him, and together they slipped from the room, as they had entered, unnoticed. Down the long hall and out into the late sunlight, now glancing red over Manhattan, down the gravel walk toward the launch-landing, they went in thoughtful silence. The elder, though grizzled, walked with the athlete's smooth feline lightness. Even his back, with its full neck and broad brain-base, gave an impression of surplus power—of an abounding virility at once attractive and threatening.

As the two walked slowly and in silence, the Penitentiary on their right loomed frowning. At the landing the older man raised his face, saturnine and predatory, toward the prison as he spoke:

"It's a great game she plays—a great game!" His voice was tense and slightly hoarse, like that of an old soldier or of one who has hobnobbed with death. "It was a good thing to see—for a man just out!" He slowly turned his keen greenish eyes to the younger man: "And that was what she did that night—just for a poor crook! You say she had no idea who I was?"

"Never saw your face, for it was under the cone. Didn't know you from the commonest yegg."

There was a pause in which the strange eyes looked far and steadily through the young doctor. Then their owner asked:

"Why isn't she contented?"

"You saw that?" eagerly.

"That was why you took me there," with a grim smile that made the dark face almost kind. Then the man went on: "And you did well, for I can diagnose and prescribe for the case."

"Then you *are* the devil!" in a whisper that was a sincere tribute.

"No. But I can guess better than most, when it comes to women—it is a part of my stock in trade. It is no new mystery—this girl's unhappiness. It is the oldest of all—the need of a mate."

"But how about the antipathy? The morbid hate of malekind——"

"Morbid——! I tell you, son, she got mixed up with a few curs just at a critical time. Result—a bad case of disgust! But the right kind of a man could cure her."

"She's not likely to meet that kind—never goes off the Island, and those muckers on the staff——"

"They don't count! Forget them! But it's up to me to produce the man—and I'll do it if he is to be found; and right there, son, I want your help. If you run across

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him, let me know! Here comes the launch. You know where to write, and I shall be in town often. Good-by!"

As they shook hands there was something in the merciless grizzled face like paternal affection; and the younger man was frankly affected.

"I know I'm going to be mighty lonesome, Dan!"

"It is the way of the world, son!" with averted face. "Write soon! So long!"

Leaping lightly aboard, over the rail, before the little launch bumped, the man took his place in the bow, and never once turned to look back at the young doctor, who stood looking after him until he was out of sight, but kept his face turned toward the busy city where he was to reenter the great world. And, half round that world, word had been flashed to the heads of police departments that he was again at liberty.

CHAPTER II

SOME VIGOROUS SOUTHERN CHIVALRY

IT IS near the end of a busy afternoon a few weeks later, and the air of the operating-room is heavy with sick-sweet ether-vapor, stirred only by the muffled snores from the table, by the occasional clank of an instrument in the tray, or by the low, "Sponge, please!" of the operator.

For the new Junior, anxiously humped over the ether-cone, it has been the hardest afternoon of the twenty-eight years of his existence. It is his third day on the staff, his first at the anesthetic, and for three hours he has piloted patient after patient through the dark waters with no word of advice or encouragement from staff or surgeon.

As for the insolence of his fellow internes, they are clearly "plain people," and he can do without their companionship. But he is bitterly lonely—worn with long worry and sick from inhaling ether, yearning for the soft voices and warm hearts of home folks, for every sweet sound and scent of rich Autumn in old Albemarle.

At this climax of misery and sensitiveness he has for the first time seen the beautiful Head Nurse who is the talk of the hospital world. The first glimpse of her cool, proud face had shot him through with a thrill of incredulous delight, and each stolen glance had found her more marvelously perfect. It added the one thing needed to make him utterly wretched, to know that she was quite beyond his reach—would never be conscious of his existence.

For he was sworn to avoid all feminine lures until his income should be large and steady; and even if he wished to know this proud beauty it would be something in the nature of a grim joke. The staff in her presence were as menials, and even the great surgeon humbly thanked her for silently pointing out flaws in his sterile technic. A mere substitute Junior might not look at this haughty empress of the operating-room.

It had been a keen delight to rest his strained eyes on her cool, regular profile; and there was a distracting shadow of a dimple in the pink elastic satin near her rounded elbow that set his lips a-tingle—but this would never do! His business was to keep that inert body breathing, and to see that the turgid red face under the inhaler did not swallow its tongue. With a weary sigh he turned for the twentieth and last time to his worrisome task.

The sunset reddened Manhattan's skyline as the last operation drew to a close. At last the surgeon said—"Ether enough!" and the new Junior laid aside the cone to straighten his aching back. The first horrible day at the anesthetic was over, and Lee Marshall Cantrell might be thankful that he had not killed anybody. But, now the strain was ended, weary homesick longing swept over him in a wave.

In this interval of relaxation, the staff-doctors were wont to seize their chance to talk to the famous Bowers on a level, while they were getting out of their gowns. And the under-nurses, who cleared up the littered room under the silent direction of their queenly chief, stole a moment from their duties to help them to disrobe, each one untying the gownstrings for her favorite interne, for the things fastened in the back. Helen Alden calmly ignored this one breach of discipline, unconscious, as always, of all but her work.

Alone and apart, Cantrell struggled unobtrusively with the knots at the back of his neck, until he awoke to the fact that he might spend the rest of his days in that gown unless he had help. Then he noticed that his two superiors, his House and Senior, were furtively enjoying his predicament; in fact, one of them had just recalled the

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"probe" (new nurse on probation), who had made a slight move as if to come to his assistance.

Exhausted and sensitive, this last petty meanness flicked him on the raw. He turned his back on the grinning group, red to his tawny mane. Still, he was thankfully conscious that the beautiful Head Nurse gave no sign of seeing anything. He could not have endured an extra curl of scorn on those cupid-bow lips.

As he recalled all the small indignities of the last three days, the blood rang in his ears. He was about to tear himself loose, when the miracle took place.

Behind him he heard the gliding rustle of crisp linen; he caught a breath of delicate clean fragrance, felt a cool, satiny hand rest for an instant against his neck, and a deft pull set him free!

He turned just in time to see a flashing backward glance and the faintest shadow of a smile he was never to forget—he stood, gown in hand, staring at the back of the haughty beauty herself, moving away with a free lithe grace—and in spirit he was at her slender feet.

HENCE it was that, in a hall-bedroom on Second Avenue, there sat that night a tall Southron who strove to keep his mind on "Gray's Anatomy" while there came between him and the page a proud, fine face with dainty scorn upon the lips—a shade of sadness in the great dark eyes. And he told himself as he went to bed:

"The loveliest gyirl I ever did see: I expect she let me loose just as she'd take a tin can off some poor fice. But her figure and her walk! And her lips and her eyes when she smiles—Hush! Oh hush!" This in a final whisper.

ALL the next morning, busied with the unbeautiful work of the dressings in the Male Surgical, he was conscious of a pleasantly annoying undercurrent that, like a half-recalled melody, divided his attention. He went to his lunch in the doctors' dining-room in a haze of tender recollection and hardly noticed that only one or two members of the staff stopped devouring their food long enough to respond to his usual old-fashioned greeting when he took his seat.

Men of no breeding, who mistook his gentleness for timidity, up to date they had not learned that he was "the" Cantrell who had worn the big V on the gridiron and been picked for the All-America Team. Hence they thought his courtesy was ingratiating servility; and of all the mistaken lot the most deluded was his Senior, Hurd.

He entered the room now—a beefy, unwholesome product of narrow streets, with thick lips and a sickening smirk—with the intention of impressing upon the new Junior his humble station. He had chosen this time to show his pretty wit.

"Well, well! Ain't it a pity!" He leered across the table as he took his seat opposite his victim. "Miss Alden's heart is broke! Did y'see her untie his bib f'r the new Junior?"

"Her first and only love!" piped a small Hebraic sycophant, in a high burlesque falsetto. "And she never was kissed! 'Ain't it awful, Mabel?' "

If Hurd could have seen the light kindling in a pair of gray eyes—but he would not have recognized the viking gleam. He tucked his napkin in his collar and reached for the butter with his own knife: "Aw, I don't know about that never was kissed!" he drawled offensively. "You can't tell about those quiet dames—they'll bear watching! Now I'll bet you——"

Even in that murky company Hurd prided himself on a lack of respect for anything. His were the only lips that smiled as they spilled slime—but this time not for long. Hardly launched on his gratuitous slander, he was suddenly checked.

The source of unclean noises being out of his immediate reach, Cantrell made use of the nearest object—the pound ball of butter—and with a short overhand swing clapped it, plate and all, over the vilifying lips, at the same time remarking:

"Yo're a filthy liah, suh!"

Under stress his soft diction was colloquial; but in his tones was the lilt of the joy of battle as he rose and went round the table to illustrate. Now Connors, his House, was Irish; therefore no lover of cowards, and bound to see fair play. Hence there followed a few of those moments that make life worth living and fill one with joy in the present and cheering hope for the future.

But Cantrell had the gift, like the Olympian Taffy, of turning off these little humoresques with a certain restraint and finish.

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So, when he had knocked the cur down, picked him up by the neck and shaken out of him an apology to all present, he only cast the whining remains among the disordered chairs, instead of beating its face to a pulp, and turned to the audience:

"Gentlemen, I thank yo' all fo' yo' kind attention, and apologize fo' makin' a disturbance. Good evenin'!"

For I am telling things as they happened, and this man was not without his weaknesses.

CHAPTER III

A FRIENDSHIP FORMED

OUTSIDE, the fresh salt air from the bay filled his lungs as he expanded from forty to forty-four inches. That certainly was a relief! But now what?

A few weeks more and he would have been a Senior, and lived in hospital until Spring. But now he was without place or friend in this hostile city, had not money enough to keep him while he prepared for those exams, and he would not go home empty-handed. The only relative—the uncle who had done all he could for him—would not like to hear that he had lost his place, nor could he help him to another. Must he hunt for a country practise, after all?

Half way down to the boat-landing he stopped and turned his face toward the Penitentiary. There had just recurred to him a letter telling him that the Resident there was a U. of V. man, though a Vermonter. Probably this Yankee would have no time to waste on a fellow-alumnus unless there were a dollar in it, but at worst he could only excuse himself coolly on the ground of engagements.

"Then I shall feel that no stone is unturned, anyhow. One good thing about this—I shall not see that gyirl again, and she cert'nly is dangerous to a man with blood in his veins! Here we go for a turndown!"

A portly Irish keeper in brass-buttoned blue looked at him fiercely through the heavy grating:

"Dr. Corbin's at luncheon, sor! Ye can wait or come again."

Extra-special-bass dignity. "I'll wait, thank you."

An Irishman hates to be beaten, even in courtesy. "Are ye fr'm th' Hawspital?"

"I am."

"Thin ye can go down the hall to th' last door on th' left."

The heavy iron clanked open. Once inside: "Perhaps I'd better wait until he's finished?" the Southerner suggested.

"Aw—gwan! If he's no use f'r ye, he'll make no secret of ut!"

"Thank you, very much."

"Don't mintion it!"

And with a fair imitation of the Southerner's bow, the portly blue-coat resumed his armchair and his newspaper.

The door was open, and in a neat little dining-room a dark-haired man of Cantrell's age and build was beginning his meal, served by a colored "trusty" waitress.

"Pardon me," said Cantrell at the door, "but the man said to walk in, and you would——"

"Be mighty glad to see you!" Corbin jumped up and came with outstretched hand. "You're just in time for lunch. Mary, fix a place! This is Cantrell of course—I was going to come for you to-day anyway. Gee! You must have been lonesome with that bunch over there! Sit down and tell me all about everything!"

"I cert'nly was homesick—and you don't know how good this feels!"

"Perhaps I don't! Didn't I drop into your blessed old State without a friend to my back, to be taken in and—well, you know what you do to any fellow who tries to be decent down there!" Meanwhile watching his guest closely, the Penitentiary Physician suddenly broke out: "Say, it strikes me that you look as if something had happened—you have skinned a knuckle: I'll bet a nickel it was Hurd!"

"It was."

"What did the pup do?"

"He began to slander a gyirl——"

"Miss Alden?"

"How did you know?"

"The dirty coward has a spite against her because she wouldn't look at him, and because she saved Joe, the janitor's, little girl, when he tried to intubate her, and fell down on it. Oh, he's a nasty mucker! I hope you gave him what was coming to him!"

"He hadn't got very far when I interrupted him."

The Southerner gave a modest version of the affair that pleased his host.

"But, say!" Corbin interrupted. "You're all wrong about the outcome of the affair.

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Hurd wasn't too popular with the powers, and this will finish him. Moreover, if you want his place, we can fix it—I think."

The Southerner only stared.

"They aren't so bad, the rest of them, when you get used to them," Corbin went on. "And then, you will live in and save expenses. Better take it. Besides, I'm lonesome here, now my best friend has left."

"I'd be only too glad to do it," said the Southerner gratefully. "It's a good deal to ask a stranger to do, though."

"Where is he?" Corbin looked behind him gravely. "But all I have to do is to speak to a friend in town about it; he'll see the commissioner, and there you are! Better stay!"

"I am only too grateful for the chance. I hope I can do something to show it. I had no idea of asking you to do anything for me. You don't know anything about me——"

"Don't I?" interrupted Corbin. "I have heard of you, my friend; and I have a debt to pay, besides." He hesitated a moment: "You see, I fell in love, when I was in Virginia, with a Virginia girl—and with all of Dixie at the same time!"

"Would you mind shaking hands again?" said Cantrell, rising, slightly flushed.

Gravely they shook, and sat down looking ashamed, like any Anglo-Saxon youths.

"Now excuse me while I phone and fix the thing up. Then we'll go in town and do things to this little village, in pairs. What?"

IT WAS Cantrell's introduction to the City of America. They were in the twenties and clean of mind; it was a day to remember, and marked the end of the Southerner's homesickness.

There was a spare couch in Corbin's room in the Penitentiary Building; from this, when they had agreed for the tenth time to stop talking and go to sleep, Cantrell called:

"'Sleep, Corbin?"

"M-m."

"I should like to thank that friend of yours. Shall I ever see him?"

"P'r'aps. He's out of town a good deal."

"He must be a mighty big somebody!"

"Top-notch, in his line."

"Politics?"

"N-not directly." He was glad it was dark.

In the silence a tug hooted on the river. After a little the Southerner asked:

"Have you met Miss Alden?"

"Yes, professionally."

"Beautiful gyirl."

"And then a whole lot!"

"Do you suppose a fellow could—I could get an introduction?"

"She doesn't see any men. Besides, you had better keep away. She is dangerous if a fellow doesn't want to fall in love, and it wouldn't be of any use at that!"

"I expect you are correct." Creaks from the couch. "It makes a fellow dizzy to think of knowing such a gyirl."

"It sure do. Better keep away. But what a time she would have at the Finals at the University. What?"

"M-m! Oh, hush!"

And the long silence was not broken until heavy breathing from both sides of the room mingled with the night-sounds of the prison—the hammer of a steam-pipe, a distant echoing step on the stone flagging of the corridor below, the long hoot of a tug on the river, while a square of grated moonlight crawled slowly across the floor and vanished.

CHAPTER IV

THE TERMS OF BATTLE

HE WHO picks up by the neck two hundred pounds of coward, and shakes therefrom an apology, lacks not for friends in the days of his youth. When, moreover, Cantrell had unpacked in his hospital quarters certain silver cups and storied sweaters, the advances of the staff became quite servile.

The nurses, it appeared, had thought him just splendid all along; hence it was that Miss Snow—Head Nurse in charge of the Female Surgical—had to settle the contention as to who was to help the new Senior with the major dressings, by taking the task herself. She was a large, capable Canadian girl with a heart in proportion to her muscle, and she was Miss Alden's roommate down at the Nurses' Home.

Behind the white screens she and Cantrell had done dressings all the morning without once mentioning the name of the person each had in mind. The next to the last case was Camilla's knee; and Camilla did not understand English. In fact, she

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understood only Russian and cruelty, and her big blue eyes for the fifteen years of her existence had continually begged the world not to hurt her. Those eyes looked at the new doctor with the fascination of terror, then with surprise, then with idolatrous worship as the dressing and probing went on, for Cantrell was prouder of his touch than of his athletic record.

The job was almost finished when Cantrell suddenly surprised the Canadian by:

"Why isn't Miss Alden happy?"

"How do you know she isn't?" Miss Snow flushed.

"Because I can see it. And she doesn't go out and have a good time like other girls."

"I'm not sure she would like me to tell."

"I beg your pardon!"

And it might have ended there, if it had not been for Camilla's gratitude. A neat bandage had been applied, when, "Here, Camilla!" Miss Snow called. "You mustn't kiss the Doctor's hands. I'm sorry, Doctor—now you'll have to scrub up all over for the last case."

"Never mind!" he patted the flaxen head bowed in remorseful tears. "I was going to move the screens for you anyhow—they're too heavy for any girl to lift."

And right there she told him a story that made his hands clench and his teeth grind. "Didn't she have *any* kin left? Didn't *anybody* have a gun?" and his voice was soft and whispery.

"Her guardian was the one to add the last insult—the one that really did drive her out of her senses for a time. When she got well—Miss Harding, Superintendent of the Home, brought her here. She couldn't bear the sight of a man for a long time. Even now she says she can see in them only selfish beasts. And I've heard her crying in the night about it."

"Could you introduce a fellow?"

"It would only make her—only hurt her, and I wouldn't do that for the world."

Nothing more was said until Cantrell had placed the last screen—an attention new to the nurses, when she whispered in his ear:

"Go to the sterilizing-room this afternoon at four."

THE foregoing is by way of showing by what hairbreadth and unforeseen contingencies it came about that Cantrell found himself deliberately violating all his rules of conduct and looking for trouble by going to the sterilizing-room at the hour when he was sure to find Helen Alden alone.

There he was in the corridor between the deserted operating-rooms, and his knees were shaky because he knew she was in that little room where the door stood open, at the far end on the left. It took nerve to go on, and what was he to say?

He could not tell her he had come to see if her teeth were white and even, if her voice had a nasal twang—that he might be disillusioned so that he could sleep o' nights. Why *had* he come? Ah! He could thank her for untying his gown: He lost no time in getting to the open door and—looked in at a gentle, beautiful picture which he carries yet.

In the little room of white tile and glistening nickel, she stood at the wheeled litter at a table, all in spotless duck, with sleeves uprolled to the shoulder. The sunset light picked out gold glints in her dark hair, violet depths in the dark eyes raised in question. The cool, fresh arms and hands, whose perfect cleanliness was famous, were a harmony of soft tints and gentle curves. She was the embodiment of the beauty of purity; the High Priestess of this Temple of Modern Cleanliness; and he trembled for her perfection, lest something should spoil his vision.

"May I come in?"

"You may."

It came so quickly, in a low, sweet tone with a liquid break—that it left him listening to an inward echo that sounded back to a time forgot and roused a longing vague and poignant.

But the deep eyes still questioned, and he summoned a husky voice: "I came to thank you, and——"

That "and" was a weak mistake. He knew it too late; for it left him open, and the thrust came in tierce:

"And to see if my teeth were sound—or if I could talk sense?"

Red to his light curls, he looked so like a boy caught in mischief that she smiled. And he caught his breath at the dimpling, dazzling revelation, inwardly rebellious—for it was monstrous! No girl had any right to *all* those things! It was well she smiled not often on the sons of men, or there would be feuds, parricides and internecine wars.

But the smile vanished with a piteous

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quiver at the ends, for silence meant guilt, and now she was angry:

"Then, if you have no more insults to offer—no measurements you wish to take, perhaps you will go! I think we have not been introduced!"

Now his head was up. White to his lips, he looked the thoroughbred he was; and his soft twists of talk came out:

"I am sorry I hurt yo'," very gently, "but I did want to help. As to insults—to a gyirl,"—lips in a tight, straight line, the muscles rippled under the fine skin over his jaws—"I *beg* yo're pardon." Still more gently, "and I'll go."

His bow had the dignity of simplicity. As he turned at the door there came again the cool, low tones:

"If Betty Preston hadn't written that you were a gentleman——"

"Betty Preston!" He wheeled, alight with hope. "Why, of co'se you're the Helen Alden she used to rave about—her classmate at Vassley! Now may I—aren't we introduced?"

"Hardly that—I should say," judicially. "But I am curious to know why you, a woman-hater, should overcome your loathing for——"

"*She* knows that's not true!" he broke in. "It's only because gyirls are *too* attractive—and I have too much regyahd fo' them"—in deep water, he met her eyes and went straight on—"to run any risk of draggin' one into the sordid misery of poverty."

He spoke his familiar creed with all simplicity, but her eyes read him keenly; then dropped. In a softer tone she began:

"Then I have to beg your pardon, and to thank you for whipping a cur. I'll prove my gratitude—by taking back my question, the question I was going to ask you; for you can not help. You must do as I tell you—go away, and don't come back—ever!"

Again her eyes were on her deft cool hands, busy with cotton and gauzes. In this new softened mood all the rich lure of her womanhood spoke from every line and tint of her glorious young body, making her words mere empty sounds. All the man in him rose to it in such wise that his senses reeled.

"I only want to come here to watch you at work—I'll not annoy you."

The dark blue eyes pierced deep, mercilessly. With a quick breath and a slight shrug of resentment she turned to put a package in the sterilizer; then said coldly:

"If you are like the rest—blind in conceit, you are not worth the trouble; but I'll give you one more chance. You may believe it or not—but the only feeling I can have toward a man is a desire to hurt and humiliate. When you or any man looks at me, even with admiration, it makes me shudder. I *hate* it! If there is one being I loathe more than the masterful man it is the *kind* man. I am no woman in any language you speak. Go away, or you will lose your ideals and waste your time!"

His firm, humorous lips curled in a smile. To think of such words being spoken in such a voice, and by a creature so irresistibly alluring, was so absurd!

But she mistook it for complacency. "Oh, you would be *so* easy!" with ominous softness. She stood motionless, eyes narrowed and lips smiling in mockery. "But it would be like hurting a child!"

His face took on the "almost ludicrous surprise" seen in the face of a man shot through the body—utter bewilderment.

And she understood; "I beg your pardon again. I didn't mean that. I'll tell you for the last time—good-by!" Then, low and parlous sweet: "Some day you'll find your Princess—and be happy."

"Give me one chance!" he answered promptly. "I'll promise not to do anything—whatever you say."

She flushed, and that made her still more angry. She bit her lip in an effort at control; then turned away from his persistent pleading gaze. After she had looked out of the window for long enough to get cool, she made another attempt to make him understand:

"I suppose you mean to be kind! Let me tell you what I have seen." She was still looking at the river outside. "There was a big man on the staff, good-looking and good-natured, who was *kind* to a nurse I knew. She was a clinging, homesick little thing, and for some months she was pitifully happy. Then he went home—'Nice little girl! Thinks she is in love; but she'll get over it!' And he never even wrote to her as he had promised. She went back to Ohio, faded, sickened and died. Somewhere the good-hearted murderer is prosperous and happy!" She turned now, and in her face there was white malevolence: "Don't tempt me!"

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"I'll not believe you could be—unfair—or little!"

Her face lighted, and she took a full breath:

"I underestimated you. That was straight from the shoulder, anyhow! But you are very young and ignorant of women. You have yet to learn how unfair and cruel a *good* woman can be when she has been hurt. To you, women are children to be amused and petted—kept on pillows. Perhaps you need a lesson. You may come here on condition that you are to be honest—there must be no pretense of unselfishness, no hypocrisy. But I shall take every unfair advantage I can get. Good-by!"

"Good evenin'!" He bowed low at the door.

IN HIS room he sat in the dusk until the supper-bell roused him. Then he got up, and said to the picture of R. E. Lee over his mantel: "Cold steel and white fire!—a gyirl to lose your soul for!" He looked at the picture long and steadily, filled his deep chest: "And she certainly must have met up with a triflin' lot of men!"

CHAPTER V

WHAT A WOMAN WISHES

TWO weeks more, and at dusk Cantrell was climbing the four flights of iron stairs that led to Corbin's realm at the top of the central building of the Penitentiary. He found that capable young physician in his little office at the end of the male ward.

"Good evenin', Cunnel! How ah yo' *now?*" said Corbin, shifting his feet from the second chair to the table. "Feet up, smoke up—and tell us about it!"

"It *is* quite a spell since I have been here." Cantrell filled his pipe. "But I have been mighty busy."

"*Busy* is good—pretty good!"

"But there are no operations, and——"

"And the sterilizing-room is closed!"

"Sure, or I'd be in it!" This without a flicker. "But I have something on my mind—you know you warned me that Hurd might try a frame-up?"

"I did," said Corbin dryly. "When did you recall it?"

"To-day." Cantrell smiled guiltily. Then he frowned. "I heard that Miss Alden was shadowed on Fifty-second Street yesterday evenin', and that the 'Shadow' was knocked down before she got to the landing, by a man she couldn't see. Then I wished I had done more thinkin' about what you said. You asked me to let you know whenever she went in town, and I never thought a thing about it until to-day. I'll do better——"

"No need!" Corbin interrupted. "I saw you weren't impressed, so I just passed the word to my friend in town. The job's in better hands now, so you can forget it *some more.*"

"That same mysterious friend of yours? When am I going to meet him?"

"Hard to tell. How are things going over there—with you, I mean?"

"Fine!"

There followed a silence that became tense, while both smoked and tried to look as if they were not thinking. Corbin broke it:

"Speaking of being busy—you have spent your off-afternoons in the sterilizing-room?"

"Yes, and, do you know, that gyirl is an education to a fellow?"

"H'm! And your evenings are spent, some of them, at the theater or at the concerts?"

"I didn't know anything about music, or acting, until Miss Alden told me what to see. I am not sorry for one minute of that time."

"H'm! But this is what I'm driving at; you told me you must pass those exams. and must run no risks of falling in love! Now it's none of my business, but I don't see——"

Corbin paused, expectant.

The Southerner at first flushed, then became very grave: "I am not afraid for the exams. I have been aiming for them fo' years; and I can pass them right now, with extras to spare—languages and things. But I didn't say I shouldn't fall in love——"

Corbin's feet came to the floor with a slam.

"I said I'd never run any risks of marrying a gyirl and dragging her into misery. Now Miss Alden's not in the least danger of falling in love with anybody. You know how she hates malekind."

"H'm!"

"Well—so long as she is in no danger, it

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lets me out. As a matter of fact I'm *not* in love; but even if I were—" Cantrell's face hardened—"I'd just have to get over it," he finished. Presently he added: "She is in no danger of being troubled by affection for any man."

He went to the window near by, and looked down on the darkening East River.

"But I don't see why you should spend so much time and take such chances with a girl as dangerous as she, especially when she has warned you that she will lead you a futile dance. Again—it's none of my business—but what do you get out of it, now or ever?" Corbin took up his place at the other window. The little office was getting dark, and the ward outside was very quiet.

"Well," Cantrell began after a pause, "I can't think of such a gyirl living all her life thinking all men are selfish beasts; and I believe that if she could be got to see more men, she would be happier. It seems to me that she has something due her for what she has suffered; and, though she is the most attractive, most delightful gyirl I eveh did see——" His voice dropped and his mannerisms came out before he stopped.

Corbin stood very still, waiting. Presently the Southerner went on in the same low tone:

"Somehow I feel that, if she has any use for a human door-mat—she's welcome!" and his voice was tenderly caressing. So that Corbin muttered under his breath: "Gee! If she could hear that, it ought to hold her for a while. But she's got that merciless witch-burning inheritance in her."

And when he spoke aloud his voice was hoarse:

"Good work, old man! Go to it!"

He turned on the lights in the ward, where, through the open door of the office, the orderlies could be seen bringing in the ward supper in big covered tin pails. Then he cleared his throat and continued:

"Now we've just time to go in town for dinner and see a show. We can get the six-thirty boat."

NEITHER one brought up the subject again until after the theater. Then, just before they were to separate for the night, Cantrell held back as they walked up from the float, and at length broke into a musing silence by:

"Can you see that that gyirl gets any better—any less bitter?"

"No," replied Corbin, with a promptness that proved he was thinking along the same lines.

The Southerner's face was moody as he added: "It cert'nly does seem as if she got worse, if anything!"

"H'm!" Unobserved, Corbin eyed the depressed figure at his side, bowed and oblivious. "But don't give in. I think you're right; she needs to go out more—see more men near her age. Hang on, and, like a bull-pup, keep nipping for more!"

"Yes, but,"—Cantrell raised a perplexed face to the light from the end of the float—"she warned me, you know, that if I showed even an unselfish interest in her case, even without sentiment, I should have to clear out!"

"H'm!" Corbin remarked. "Out of the fulness of my knowledge of the sex, permit me to suggest that they don't always wish to be obeyed!" And he went his ways, feeling much pleased with himself.

CHAPTER VI

FOR ME—AH, PLEASE!

IN THE sterilizing-room the next afternoon Cantrell was telling her of the "Professor's Love-Story," which he had seen for the first time the night before. Her quick and complete apprehension on all subjects was one of her chief charms, only marred by cynicism; and he had come to look forward to discussing with her each new experience or idea.

"I saw it," she interrupted him. "It was the last play I saw before—before my illness. I have not been to the theater in three years."

"Isn't it delightful?" he asked. "And can't the leading lady *sit down?*"

"She is beautifully graceful,"—not too warmly, "but the play!—at the time, I remember, I thought it 'too lovely for anything!' Now I can see that it is like all love-stories—silly and disgusting!" The delicate full lips curled a wee bit more.

Cantrell looked at the clear profile incredulously. "I don't see how it could be disgusting to anybody."

"Can't you see? How could anything be more sickening than the doddering of that old simpleton, under the influence of his senile passion?" She turned away and did not see his hot, painful blush.

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When he spoke it was in a cool, firm tone: "It seemed to me a right sweet little play!" After a silence he added: "And his love I thought mighty unselfish and beautiful!"

"Unselfish!" Now her scorn was biting. "But I forgot. You still believe in Santa Claus. You haven't grown up."

"But I shall—and so will you. When you do, you will see these things differently."

Her quick glance of surprise encouraged him to go on, though astonished at his own rashness: "I do wish you would go out more—see more people——"

"Remember our pact!" she flashed. "There was to be no hypocrisy—no pretense of unselfish interest, even. If you are going to break over, it will be the end of everything!"

"Very well!" His face was white and set, for it had come to mean much to him. Although it hurt more than he had thought possible, he went on: "Then I'd better go. If I have made you more bitter and unhappy, I'll go away." He swallowed. "I'd do mo' then that fo' yo'!" he finished very softly. Then he watched her go to the window and stand for a time looking at the rain. Now his banishment was coming.

She spoke over her shoulder, distinctly: "That is the third time you have said you wanted to help me. Will you promise to do one thing I ask—without condition?"

"Yes."

"Then,"—she turned to watch his face—"take me to see 'Nance Oldfield' and 'The Bells' Saturday night; and let *me* pay the expenses."

She could not meet his eyes, filled with a pain like those of a stricken animal; but after a pause she raised her head and went on: "Miss Harding had the tickets sent, and I can pay the expenses, just carriage-hire, easily. I want to see if I am any better—to try my wings. Please swallow your pride this once, and keep your promise!"

Still he did not speak, and she came a step nearer—then another.

He could catch that delicate fragrance, as she looked up at him at last—fair in the eyes:

"For me—ah, please!"

While the dark and the gray eyes caught and clung for a balancing moment, the baby boy Dan nocked his longest shaft, then paused out of sheer pity—but when was he true sportsman?

"I'll keep my promise—this one time."

It was a strange look she gave him, before she turned to her work. He took his leave formally, but before he passed the door she flung over her shoulder:

"It was easy! After I had warned you, too! This round is to me!"

She had struck his sorest spot, and he swore to himself that she should not have the chance to humiliate him again. That was on his way to his room. Before morning he had forgiven her and looked forward to seeing her at operations the next day.

BUT she was not there—nor was she in the little room the day following. And Saturday morning he became panicky and fled to Corbin for advice and comfort.

He found that gentleman amused rather than sympathetic: "Go 'way, man! Go 'way! Whah was yo' raised? Send your dress-suit to be pressed and send her some flowers."

"I have done both—but why do you reckon she won't see me!"

"Probably fixing something to wear—shirring up the back, cutting on the bias, or some such feminine devilment. And your finish looms large on the horizon!"

So spake the engaged man, and was vastly satisfied with himself.

As the inherent reasonableness of this dawned upon the harassed Southron, a great peace settled on his soul.

NOT by nature introspective, neither was he quite a fool; so he knew when he waited in the "Reception-room" of the Nurses' Home—dry-throated and longing for a sight of her clear cool face—that he was in dire straits. Then, when she came down to him in a long cloak and white something that showed only dark eyes and regular profile, the jump of his heart was a thing entirely new.

Entirely new also was the girl he took to the theater; never once using her power of hurting, subtly responding to his every thought, silently yielding and feminine. And this dependence was intoxicating.

It was in the theater, under the balcony, that the next gun was fired. Before the cloak-room she paused, with one lithe movement freed herself from her wraps, and turned to him with face tilted in gentle challenge. He knew that he reeled a bit

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where he stood. Before him stood the Princess in the flesh, and all his dreams faded to shadows!

She was all in cream-white, and the sweep of rose-ivory from cheek to neck, from shoulder to arm and hand, was without break or shadow. No detail of curve or tint halted the eye a moment; for the whole sweet, gracious figure, with its under-glow of white fire, throbbed with a power of charm that no living thing could fail to feel. He could see that all eyes turned to her as flowers follow the sun; but she looked to him alone. The music from within now came to cradle his senses in enchantment, as she swayed toward him and looked into his face like a pleading child:

"Don't say you don't like it! It is for you—because you swallowed your pride 'this one time'!"

He bowed like his great-grandfather: "I *nevah* was proud—*befo'*!"

She flashed him a smile and he heard behind him a man's quick indrawn breath in unconscious tribute.

Then she answered: "That was a 'right sweet little speech.' Then you might check these things and give me your arm."

But the last was so low that only he heard. The light hand on his sleeve lifted him into high ether where he knew not time nor space.

They were taking their seats, well in front on the left, when he was brought heavily to earth by a firm hand on his other shoulder:

"Excuse me! I think the lady dropped this!"

The voice was tense and compelling, and he turned to meet a pair of greenish eyes set in a face that jarred him like the impact of a fist. Keen, but calm, with the ruthless consciousness of power, it roused him by its call—the challenge of the Eternal Masculine.

He saw the response of the girl's strong, sensitive features to this threatening presence, as she included the stranger in her thanks; and admired her composure as she opened her program and murmured behind it: "Have you seen your friend—on the *other* side?"

Leaning forward, he saw that her next neighbor was a fine elderly woman, and that she was with Dr. Hurd!

Hurd was elaborately unconscious, and responded to his companion's chat with surly grunts—evidently a relative.

"It looks as if the stage were set for a tragedy both sides of the footlights!" Helen Alden went on. "But if things are to happen I like to have strong men about—like your neighbor."

It was a speech they were to remember. Now in real life, when things begin to happen they keep it up with cumulative force, regardless of decent moderation or artistic restraint. Cantrell was exhilarated by the presence of the vivid and diverse personalities about him, all his faculties alert and ready. And afterward he said that nothing that happened came as a surprise.

While he was furtively scanning the fine grizzled head of the green-eyed man, admiring the feline grace and quickness of his least movement, noting his well-groomed symmetry and poise; the girl had made a conquest of the old lady. A wisp of gray hair astray had given her the opportunity, and at once they were acquainted and mutually charmed.

"It *seemed* impossible there could be any blood in common," she said to Cantrell as the orchestra stopped and the bell tinkled. "She married Dr. Hurd's uncle."

Cantrell thrilled to a little nestling movement at his side as the curtain went up and the house darkened. Soon the people were under the spell of the master's portrait of remorse.

The man of the tiger eyes was the only exception. He alone kept his sinister gaze fixed on the young people near by. Now he watched the girl's delicate profile, so sensitive to the actor's values, so deeply and quietly responsive; now turned his aggressive face toward the young man's curly head, a little inclined in protective adoration to his lovely companion; and into the amber-green between his narrowed lids there crept a softer glow—his grim lips softened as if in reminiscence.

It was the cottage scene in "The Bells." The minutes passed unnoticed while the master of stage-craft wrought with a strong, sure touch, tightening his hold on his passive audience. The scene was near its close and the whole house under the artfully created terror of impending disaster, when there came an empty pause, a fearful silence.

Suddenly, from the right wings, a smoky puff threw a crimson glare across the deserted stage. A high muffled voice from the balcony barked:

"FIRE!"

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CHAPTER VII

A FIGHT FOR LIFE

A RECENT theater-horror fresh in mind, the people were on their feet in a second, shivering like frightened horses. A few of cleaner strain in the front rows stood up on their seats and shouted back at the sea of white faces:

"Sit down! There's no danger! Sit down!"

But in their voices there was sharp apprehension of a panic; the crowd felt it, and it only tightened the tension. With anxious eyes fixed on the smoke billowing across the stage, while noisy confusion sounded from the wings, they were ripe for a fatal stampede.

Cantrell, standing with the rest, looked down into the face beside him. She smiled, with a curl of scorn for the weak animalism of the men about them. He opened his mouth to speak, but at that instant the heavy hand rested again on his left shoulder:

"Let me past, son!"

It was a not unkindly growl. The stranger slipped past—away from the "Exit," on their left under the balcony, and toward the center aisle. Passing the women next, with a muttered apology and eyes cast down, he forced his body between them and the terrified Hurd, who stared at the smoke on the stage, entirely paralyzed with terror.

Facing toward Cantrell the stranger raised his head with a gesture that had in it a sort of savage dignity, suggesting the proud neck-arch of a stallion, and as he pressed backward to make a passage for the women he said in a voice that sounded clear through the tumult:

"Now then! This way! Get out of the jam! In about five seconds we shall have a taste of hell!"

Just as Hurd drew out of the way to let the strange man past, the fire-proof asbestos curtain started to roll down; and every face turned to it in hope.

A little way it rolled smoothly—stopped—jerked and rolled back up— Then down again it rolled a little lower—stopped—jigged in grisly mockery—and *stuck fast!*

"Help! Fire! Lemme out!" Hurd bellowed and blubbered as he broke loose. The first brutal backward sweep of his heavy arm dashed the frail old lady against the seat; but, before he could trample on her, the tiger-eyed one garroted him from behind and swung him easily over the seats to the rear, as he would fling aside an empty sack. And the terrified animal clawed his way, shrieking, into the pack; for now the mob-beast was roused and rampant.

As the first mad, shouting rush bore the stranger toward the left-hand exit, in the rear of the party he had chosen to protect, his green eyes began to dance with a baleful light—turned right and left on the fear-crazed mob. And whoever met them shrank in terror greater than that of the flames, for his grim face was cold, with a demoniac, smiling cruelty strange to see, and the swift smooth movements of his hands were followed by low moans of pain from their victims.

But, shrink as they might, those near were crushed on by those behind until the pressure was terrific and increasing.

Though Helen Alden at first had caught up her skirts, she had dropped them to support the half-stunned old lady. Now the relentlessly increasing crush had almost stifled her under her burden, and Cantrell could not relieve her without danger of breaking her bones in the effort. They were being jammed slowly to the left, in spite of all the stranger could do, but the latter was working on another plan.

Thrusting right and left, he grasped a seat-back in each hand, raised his own weight and swung his feet free and forward toward Cantrell. "Plant them on the irons!" His heavy voice was plain above the roar. If the seat-irons held, he hoped thus to brace himself and hold back the murderous force from the rear.

Cantrell had placed one foot—he noticed how fine and shapely was the shoe—when the "EXIT" under the balcony gave way outward. At this there was a frenzied roar and a lifting heave. They were picked up and swept along like feathers in a gale.

Only a few feet, for the exit packed, and the jam was worse than before. In helpless agony Cantrell felt the girl ground against his side in such a viciously increasing crush that he suffered for her—groaned under his scant breath in a useless effort to ease the grinding of her sweet body.

"I'm all right—let me down!"

With her first conscious breath, the old lady removed her weight from the girl, but

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she was still held up on the solid pack like a chip on a wave. Now reaching down to free her train, Helen Alden found it was too late. It was firmly held. Cantrell could feel the downward pull mercilessly dragging her from his side.

Already the air was pierced by the shrieks of women trampled, and in numb horror he realized that she would be padded to a pulp before his eyes. Still the face she turned to him was clear and brave—she even smiled, and in the din he could see her lips shape the words: "Remember! No privileges!"

But in an effort to indicate, by a nod of her head, that he was to help the old lady, her chin dropped on her breast and did not rise.

Then the tiger-man roared:

"Get under her!—and *heave!*"

He never ceased his wicked work with his hands, which made it possible for Cantrell, who had shot his hands down by his sides at the word of command, to get a hold and lift; so that a downward wriggle of his body brought him beneath the unconscious girl.

"It will be his life for hers!" Still upborne on the pack, the old lady spoke with the calm, sad fatalism of age, and her thin voice was clear above the roar. But the man of the strange eyes growled one word: "No!" while in cold, vicious fury he worked faster at his definite plan.

Cantrell on the floor had torn the murderous cloth across, and had the girl's thighs in the old foot-ball grip that nothing human could loose. At this supreme moment he knew that in his arms was all that the world held that was sweet and precious; with a rush it came over him, thrilled him to a very transport of desperate effort, and he threw all the vigor of his sound young manhood into one long backward and upward heave of trunk and thighs.

For five bursting, fiery seconds that seemed hours, a solid granite mass resisted, then slowly yielded, gave way, and, as he relaxed his painful muscles, he knew that he had saved all that was worth while. He had no will to drag out his lifeless body.

Dully he felt his side crunching on an iron angle, while one leg to the knee was twisted down tight to the floor—thrust under a seat-iron in kneeling. Then the onward movement of the press bound it fast.

He noted that there was little pain, as in a boxing-bout after he had warmed to his work, and idly wondered whether the ribs or ankle would break first.

Then he heard a crack and a splintering of iron and wood; a heavy voice growled:

"Back! Yes, *back!* I've got you! Ugh!"

And a great weight was lifted, tender hands were helping him to his feet, and he heard the old lady saying: "You almost gave your life for—Help him! He's fainting!"

He opened his mouth to protest that he was not a bit faint. A pain stabbed him in the side, and everything turned dark.

FOR the man of the tiger eyes had worked to some purpose. By the time the girl came to the surface, lifted by Cantrell's last effort, the green-eyed man had got the hold he wanted. When with her first free breath she began to beg the fear-crazed mob to spare the man beneath, he was ready to second her appeal. With his feet well braced on either side of the girl, his body level in the plane of pressure and his legs and arms flexed, he was ready! It was he Cantrell heard growling, as he straightened his spring-steel muscles, thrusting piston-wise with arms and legs steadily and resistlessly as a mighty engine, and spread the brute mass of human flesh apart, regardless of groans and curses, until the two women stood in a free space, and helped Cantrell to his feet.

There, squirming and swearing in his grip, he held them for a few seconds—as long as it was necessary. For now the blaze had been for some time extinguished, and at length a hoarse and disheveled stage-manager had persuaded the assemblage of New York's beauty and chivalry to stop pawing and trampling one another. Then he let go and stood up, paternally remarking, "There, there, son! Don't get peevish!" as he took by the throat and laid on his back a whimpering scion of Manhattan's aristocracy who, while he was opening a space in the jam, had been insanely clawing at his defenseless face.

CHAPTER VIII

IS DAN WHEELER RIGHT?

"HE'S all right. It was collapse after the strain, more than the effects of injury. He's coming round now."

It was Corbin's face Cantrell saw first, bending over him.

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"How do you feel now, old man?"

"I'm all right. Where is she? Was she hurt——"

But an effort to rise made him drop back with a groan.

"No, not a bit. Here she is!" Corbin moved a bit aside. Cantrell saw the deep, blue-black eyes, saw her hands before them —then she was gone, and an elderly figure followed her. He did not try to get up again, but he could see that he was on a broad leather couch beside an open fire, in a room all books, dark woods and leather. A smell of booky leather filled the air, and it was very quiet. Corbin turned back a puzzled face after watching the women leave the room.

"Better not talk much until Dr. Bowers comes and we get your slats strapped up. I can guess what you want to know. We are in Mrs. Macintosh's library, on Gramercy Park, and we were brought here in the swellest and fastest imported car you ever saw."

"Macintosh! Is she——"

"Yes, she is *the* Mrs. Macintosh who gave the laboratory to the University; and she is Hurd's aunt. But she says what she thinks, and Dr. Hurd must hunt another boarding-place. She's got enough of *him!* And you ought to come in heir to the millions! Some folks certainly do have the luck!"

"Who was the man?" Cantrell got out with some effort.

"Ah, now you're talking! That was my friend, Dan Wheeler—the man I've told you about, and—well, you saw him. There's no use talking about Dan, for words don't fit him."

"Where is he?"

"Ask me something easy. He disappeared when he had got me down from the balcony where I had been watching you, and found out you weren't badly hurt. But here's Dr. Bowers!"

"What's this? One of my boys in trouble?" The great man came straight to the couch in genuine concern, followed by a neat maid to wait upon him.

"Let's see; just lie still and let us do the pulling. Um-m! Not so bad. Now then, take a long breath. All right. Now Dr. Corbin, I see you have the straps ready; just come around here."

In a few seconds they had Cantrell so he could sit up and breathe with some freedom, whlie they strapped and bandaged the ankle. Fortunately there was nothing more than two cracked "slats" and a sprained ankle to show for the night's work.

"Now they're fixed, they won't be very painful," said the great man, "but you gave your heart a tremendous stretching to-night, and it may be irritable for some time. You must be careful of it."

Mrs. Macintosh came back in time to hear the report, and now volubly broke in: "I should say he must! He must stay right here to-night. You hear me, George Bowers? Tell your patient he mustn't be moved, for I'll not stay in this house alone with the servants; and that precious nephew of mine shall never pass my door again! Besides, I do believe everybody's gone clean crazy to-night! First, the man who saved us is swallowed up by the pavements. Then this girl has just insisted on posting off to Blackwell's Island, as if this boy hadn't risked his life for her! I sent Parker with her, for I believe the witch has conjured me. You're to bring her to see me soon, and often—do you hear, young man?"

"I'm afraid I couldn't, if she didn't want to come," Cantrell confessed dolefully.

"And you admit it! Men *are* such fools where women are concerned! And the bigger a man is, the bigger fool he makes!"

"By that rule, I reckon I ought to be President," Cantrell drawled soberly, and saw nothing to laugh at.

"But now, George Bowers, what about this boy staying here with his friend to-night? You haven't said a word; don't sit there like a bump on a log!" It was evident that the old lady and the surgeon were friends of long standing.

The famous man announced pompously: "It would be very unwise to attempt to move him for—how long?"

He looked up into the kindly old face that was looking at Cantrell searchingly. Suddenly Mrs. Macintosh broke out:

"Wasn't your mother Evelyn Bolling of Roanoke?"

"She was. And I can just remember her."

"Poor boy! For a month!" she suddenly snapped at the surgeon—"or as long as I can keep him! You ought to know that without being told. I declare, I'll get a doctor with some sense!"

And while she sent the maid for things to eat and drink, for it was her butler's night off, she and Cantrell got deep in a

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search for mutual friends and distant relatives in the Old Dominion. Though a New Englander by birth, she had been at a Baltimore convent-school with his mother; and when she excused herself to go to an old lady's early bed, the Southerner felt that he had found another home—and that in New York, of all places!

BUT when Corbin was acting as amateur valet, in their luxurious big front room that looked on the park, he tried to liven up his friend, who seemed in the deeps of despair:

"Mighty cute, weren't you! Hobbling on your lame leg to open the door for her? I could have beaten you to it, but I didn't want to spoil your chances. You are the long-lost baby-boy, all right! Just show the strawberry-mark in the last act, and you can ride in whispery big motor-cars all the rest of your days!"

There was no response, and Corbin looked up from the shoe he had removed: "Something seems to have got you down for fair! If I had made such a hit all round, it seems to me I shouldn't pull a face as long as a wheel-track. What is it?"

"You saw her, to-night?"

"I did. Oh, my boy, *I did!*" Then Corbin drew a long breath: "But I don't see why that should give you the blues."

"Suppose you had just found out that your girl—the one in Virginia—was the only one for you; and you knew that she shrank from you as she would from a snake—knew that she always would; and that her loathing grew worse the longer she knew you?"

"So it has happened. Any fool could see it would!" Corbin turned the shoe in his hand and talked to it pensively. "But I don't believe it. How do you know—about the shrinking, I mean? You never happened to touch her by mistake?"

"*Never!* Never was near enough, until she took my arm to-night by her own suggestion. But when I look at her of late, I can't help showing—what she is—and I can see the fear in her face! It is a shuddering, shrinking fear, and no one could mistake it!"

"Sure?"

"Sure! And it gets worse every day. She warned me that it would, and told me, or the same as told me, that if this—happened, she should take delight in humiliating me; said that was her only motive in letting me hang around. I took the challenge, with no idea it was serious. But she's done it! Good Lord, she's done it!" He dropped his head on his hands.

Corbin threw the shoe under the bed and leaned back and whistled: "*Whee-ee!* Why didn't you tell me this before?"

"Why should I? It sounded so absurd and melodramatic! She even said she couldn't help it. I knew how it would sound in the telling, but if you had heard and seen her!" Head still in his hands, Cantrell spoke with monotonous, dull despair.

"I *have* seen her—*had* seen her—and I should not have laughed! She isn't the kind to pose, and she has the determination —" And he got up and walked to the window. "I wish I'd never said a word to——" He broke off and whirled to look suspiciously at Cantrell, saw his head still bowed, and turned back to the window.

There was a long silence; finally broken by the Southerner: "Anyhow, I took the chances, and I'll take my medicine. She shall never have the chance to walk on me, for I shall keep it to myself."

"Good! More power to you!"

Corbin turned to help him into bed. But now he was the one depressed; said little, and that absently; and long after the Virginia man was sleeping the sleep of utter fatigue, he was lying awake and staring.

Once he muttered: "They say he doesn't know what fear is; now I *know* it. I only hope the other is true—that he knows women. For if he is wrong in this, he has spoiled one good man! He's just the kind to take it hard, and she's——"

A silence. Finally Corbin turned to the wall with a long sigh: "Well, Dan has never guessed wrong since I've known him, but I'd like to know if he's right now!"

And presently the only sound to interrupt their heavy breathing was the *clop-clop* of a horse's shoes on the asphalt, as a belated rubber-tired hansom passed through the unfrequented street.

CHAPTER IX

A DEFIANCE

CANTRELL opened his eyes in the air of quiet luxury of the old house on Gramercy Park to find that he had outslept Corbin, who had gone to his work, and to see Mrs. Macintosh's second man at his

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bedside with numerous creature-comforts for his private and particular benefit, offering to "valet" him.

It was a new life, to which he would have taken like the trite duck to water, if last night had not made him a lover. He found the kind old lady anxious to spoil him, and had at his command her whole establishment, including a mechanic pining for some intrepid person to whom he might show the homicidal speed of the new imported car—to say nothing of other amusements that would have dazzled him a month ago. In short, he might have spent his convalescence in the enjoyment of all things a reasonable being could desire. But he had passed out of that class—see definition of love!

In his ears were low tones of a voice that was music, before his eyes the vision of a girl clear and keen as the North Wind, but newly kind and sweet. The memory of that new graciousness kept him tense with the desire to rush off to the little white-tiled room where his heart was—in those cool white hands.

So, when he had spent a few more hours distant-relative-hunting with his kindly hostess, that keen-eyed lady declared it was cruelty to animals to keep him, and let him go in time to reach the little room at sunset, provided he would use his influence to bring "the Witch" to dinner that very night.

THUMPING down the corridor to the familiar open door, his heart was going harder than ever, while he told himself once again that he could not hope to find her as gentle as on the night before. In the doorway he paused, leaning on his crutches, and his eyes were gently pleading.

When her dark lashes swept up in the old silent greeting, they straightway fell again; the delicate lips tightened, and curled a little at the ends.

"Then you really weren't hurt at all?" he asked eagerly.

"As you see. And how about the hero of the hour?"

The same cool disdain. His face fell as he painfully made his way across the room and climbed to his perch on the anesthetizer's stool:

"I don't know, for he ran away, as you know, and I have not seen Corbin to ask about him."

She flashed at him a look of incredulous, scornful amusement, but he met it so simply that she dropped her eyes to her work, as he went on: "But I'm going to see him if I have to crawl!" He was laying aside his crutches: "If he hadn't taken control of things, no one knows what would have become of us! And what a man he was!" he went on now, lost in admiration. "No more excited than if it had been a game we were playing! And he was the only one who had all his senses—I was so rattled I couldn't think, until he told me what to do."

"You were!" she returned promptly. "Just like the rest. And that crowd: There you saw the modern gentleman—his courage and his chivalry!"

As she recalled the scene, his eyes were feasting on the fresh curves of her smooth, rounded arms; and at the thought of how all that loveliness might have been mangled under trampling feet, he drew an involuntary hissing breath through his set teeth: "E-e-e-e-u!"

It called from her another questioning look into his face. Then she caught up his thought:

"It *was* a lovely sight! And still you maintain that men are more than beasts!"

"But many of them kept their self-control," he pleaded.

Again she seemed for an instant suspicious of his simplicity, and again she could not meet his clear gaze.

"And then, look at that man Wheeler!" he finished with such generous warmth that for the moment, forgetting to be cynical, she stopped her work and gave herself up to recollections. "That *was* a sight to remember!" She spoke with eyes narrowed on a distant point. "There is the sort of man no one can despise—the sort of man to know what he wants and get it. Such men will succeed; fair or foul, they win anyway. This Wheeler is a strong man who can't be beaten; he will not *let* a man beat him, and women can get no hold on him because he has no sentimental weakness. Now there"—she turned on him suddenly,—"is where you fail, where you will always fail. You are strong enough, but you are too soft. You lack the 'gall to make oppression bitter'—to bend the weak to your will; and that is why men will outstrip you. And women—" her voice dropped and her eyes with it "—women can do as they please

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with you—just so they don't do anything that isn't 'nice'!"

He stared as at a clairvoyant. It was not her first shrewd analysis, but he never got used to them. Coming from lips so perfect, all bare and harsh truths sounded grotesque; and this time she had infinite power to hurt him, because—Have you ever been in love?

After some thinking, he announced slowly, "I expect you—I expect that is mighty correct!" After more thinking he added, "But an Assistant Surgeon in the Army gets a living without cutthroat competition, and among decent people."

"A bare living," she said it with contempt, "and hardly that, in case of sickness or trouble. You would not be safe to marry, for sickness would mean possible suffering —what you call 'sordid misery'! Then, any girl you will marry will find such a salary too small, and the life at an Army post is living burial."

She couldn't know how every word cut, yet why should she not discuss the subject coldly? She felt nothing but delight in causing him pain. As he watched her at her work, it seemed more and more monstrous. She was so wondrous sweet and fine! Gazing, he forgot his inner wounds, and a tenderness crept into the steady gray eyes. She looked up and surprised that gaze, for all his effort to mask his face, and he saw her shrink, then flash out with resentment:

"But your weakness with women is your worst fault. Here you are, right now, spoiling your chances of passing your examinations—losing your chance of making a home for the girl you're going to love some day—by wasting your time with me! Don't you see that you are false to your Princess?"

He caught his breath, and his downcast face was crimson. He did not risk showing his face fully, but heard her go on in a softer tone: "I am really doing this for your good. I have proved that, when I choose, I can be agreeable enough to keep you—in attendance, haven't I?"

"Yo' were mighty kind last evenin'," he said, very low and softly.

A pause followed; he wanted to look up —but waited. She spoke again: "I'll confess. I did intend to keep you from your work, and to laugh at you when you had failed on your exams! It was to punish you for—but now you *have* done a big thing for me; helped me more than you could have hoped to do; so I'll give you another chance. Let's say that we are quits. You go your way—and I'll not trouble you any more."

Presently he found hoarse voice: "But I can pass the exams *now*. I need no more preparation and—I want you to trouble me!" At the last it was a whisper.

So long a silence followed that he looked up, though he knew his face was betraying him. She was standing like a lovely statue, looking at him with wide eyes in which there was fear—a shrinking fear that hurt him more than words. But as he tried to speak, she threw up her head proudly, and again was an angry goddess:

"So you defy me again to do my worst! It must be the last time! And when you come to this room for the last time, don't ask or expect any sympathy. Will you remember?"

"I will."

He faced her steadily, and his gray eyes were clear and kind. She looked in them—far through them, it seemed—and at length: "Then I suppose we are to go to Mrs. Macintosh for dinner to-night; she 'phoned that the car would be at the landing at six-thirty."

And, for all her dire threats, he was deeply happy.

CHAPTER X

AN UNHEEDED WARNING

THAT night at Mrs. Macintosh's was the first of many, and it was after dinner that Helen Alden first played for him. At first it seemed gratuitous cruelty that to all her other attractions should be added this one supreme expression of beauty. Cantrell speaks of that evening now in a whisper, and adds that he has no recollection of the return to the Island afterward.

The months between that time and Spring were the months of his unfolding under the impulse of the same force that opens the flowers or sends the sap welling up in the tree-boles. He could feel his growth; in contact with his perfect mate he awoke each day to a world more vivid, more vitally throbbing with human passion; and he knew that he was larger in depth and breadth of sympathy, because of the love that was in him. He could feel the increas-

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ed effectiveness of his presence in his every human relation, and knew that he was stronger for the development of his emotional nature—that essential motive force without which the greatest mind is but an engine without steam. It all meant the same old truth—that all the world loves a lover.

It was only when he saw the shrinking and fear in her face—and he saw it oftener, in spite of his efforts at control—that he felt black despair; but he was young enough to rebound, strong enough to have faith that all would come right in the end.

SO HERE we omit a whole book of character-development, and come to the day when he was to go to Washington to take the examinations for the Army appointment.

At last he must face the fact that this was the parting of the ways. For she had told him plainly that he could not ask any girl of sense to marry on an Assistant Surgeon's salary, and he must in some way get more to offer before he could even try to overcome her antipathy—must be in a position to offer her something in the way of achievement before he could even announce his purpose. Perhaps, when he had passed the examinations, he could tell her that he was going to try to win her—some time. But at best this meant long separation, and it remained to be seen how he could endure it.

It was with this dark outlook that he went to the little white room for the next to the last time; for he would come back after the examinations to tell her he had passed, and perhaps to tell her his plans.

He found her at her work, more spotlessly lovely, more richly alluring than ever; and it gripped his heart to think he would not again see her thus for long, long months. These hours of perfect understanding and companionship in the little white Temple of Purity had come to be the very heart of his daily life.

"All ready to go?" she asked cheerfully.

"I am packed, and prepared for the examinations."

Her quick glance proved that she was not so sure of his limpid simplicity as she had been at first: "Still think you want that stupid Army place?"

"It will be a start, at least, and a living."

"A start toward nowhere, and a living that will not permit you to marry. You always said you should not think of marriage until you were safe from want and suffering from poverty. Now if you would take Dr. Bowers' offer, you might get a practise worth having, after a few years in his office. Then you might look for your Princess."

He was used to her thrusts, but this made him wince. "No money to wait on. When I get the Army appointment, I can look about me and decide on the next step."

"You will not get it."

"Why do you persist in that? I am well prepared on the medical branches and have a lot of extras to offer, besides my A. B. and letters from people who count."

"Just a premonition—and they never fail."

"You would enjoy hearing me confess I had failed." He smiled at her; then tried to erase the fondness he knew showed in his eyes, for he saw for the hundredth time that look of fear and shrinking that had always followed such betrayal. Each time it cut him deeper; each time perplexed him more.

"Yes," she said after a pause, "and I want you to promise to come back here to tell me, before you go into the country." But she did not look at him.

"I intend to come here once more."

"I have another reason for asking it." Her lips were set and white. "You will admit I have shown open preference for you—enough to make the nurses talk?" she asked evenly.

"Yes, you have been very brave and kind."

"I had to appear so to keep you—in attendance."

"That was not necessary."

"Anyhow, I did it, and now I ask something in return. There will be talk enough anyhow, but I have no liking for the rôle of deserted damsel; so I want you to come back here for one interview, to give color to the story that you—that I sent you away."

She was putting a package into the steam sterilizer, and made the first false move he had ever seen. In some way she allowed the hot door to swing against her bare arm. A sharp pain shot through him and he was at her side, the cool, smooth arm in his hand. Slowly she turned her face up, pale and troubled, and as he met her eyes he drew back, bewildered by inward strife: "I beg your pardon. Did it—does it hurt?"

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She turned away and went to the window and leaning against the casement, rested her head on her bent arm. He saw her shoulders shake a little two or three times. Presently she said:

"It is *time* for you to go. Come back as you promised—for the reason I gave you—just *my* pride. Good-by."

"I don't believe it! You are too big for that. I know you too well. But I shall come back——"

"You know nothing!" She faced about hotly. "It *is* the reason!"

"You may have the chance," he answered steadily, "but I have one thing to ask of you. Corbin tells me Wheeler sends word that Hurd is bound to be revenged on both of us for supplanting him with his aunt. He has made a powerful friend in town and is waiting for a chance at one of us. Please don't go in town alone or after dark."

"I shall promise you nothing——"

"But Wheeler is never mistaken. And think what it might mean—life, or worse!"

"It is nothing to you—or anybody. I'll make no promise——"

"Then let Corbin know when you are going."

"Good-by! Must *I* leave the room?"

"Good-by!"

A long look backward at the door—she was at the window—and he was gone.

CHAPTER XI

FAILURE AND A TRAGEDY

ON THE way to Washington he was strangely anxious. Secure as he had felt regarding the outcome of the examinations, so much depended on them that he was newly worried. A living had come to mean much more—the thought of failure threw him into a cold sweat.

But it was absurd! All the people he knew—army people who knew about the examinations—said he was sure of appointment. And he had waited and prepared himself in every way possible. It could not be that he could fail.

The next morning came the physical examinations.

In the bright room three men in uniform sat at a long table, very cordial and very courteous. Deprecatingly they asked him to go through certain formalities:—one suggested that he sort some colored worsteds into piles of the same color, read some dwindling letters on large white cards; another had him squeeze some springs, while they busily wrote down figures with pencils.

Then one of them had him strip, weighed him, had him do some jack-in-the-box stunts. Then he stood still, with the cool ring of a Bowles stethoscope pressed to his chest; suddenly he felt a hitch inside that reminded him of the night of the theater-fire. The examiner had called the others to listen, and then they put their heads together and whispered.

They came back to him, and said something—nothing organic—only athlete's-heart—very irritable—had been strained—year on the plains without looking at a book would fix it. Very sorry (Cantrell could hear almost every word, now that his ears didn't ring) that they "couldn't pass such a heart." Next year it would probably be all right, and they should look forward to seeing him——

Here Cantrell heard somebody muttering, with his own voice, that next year he would be beyond the age-limit; so this was his last chance. There didn't seem to be any answer to this. They were very sorry and helped him on with his clothes, for his fingers belonged to some one else.

Ten long years, the best of his life, he had devoted to making success secure at this point; and the man was sorry, for he had said so!

With a short laugh he turned his face toward the rooms he had engaged for the week of the examinations. There was nothing between him and that man cleaning the streets. Of what use his A. B., his sciences and his languages? The professional woods were full of good men starving, or near it. A good old professor had told him that he ought to get a salaried position, because he was not knave enough to succeed in professional competition. A country practise was all that was left.

He would not go where he was known. People would not care to listen to explanations about athlete's heart—they would only see that he was a failure at the outset. And who was it who had told him he would fail?

With another shock he realized that he had not thought of her before because he had in some way felt that she was a part

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of him. Now it was sure that he was to see her only once more.

He would confess his failure, admit that she was right in her every contention, and tell her that henceforth he would act accordingly. He would throw aside all sentiment, as well as all human feeling and the dictates of conscience, and wrest success from the—but what was success? Money, of course! He would get it in any way that did not involve unpleasant consequences—and bring it to her as an offering! And he meant it. He was not given to introspective reflection, but his was a nature simple and direct.

When he had reached this resolve, he paused—stood stock-still on the sidewalk, and, strange to say, the thing that stopped him was the thought of Dan Wheeler! He recalled the attitude of the great crook on the three occasions when he had seen him with Corbin; how he had told of his hair-raising escapes with a mildly deprecating disgust, and listened to harmless tales of their college days with a keen relish and a childlike deference. Cantrell found that he could not announce his new creed to Wheeler! For Wheeler admired him and Corbin extravagantly, because he believed them "square." Money was *not* the thing; that was clear.

Enough of thinking! He would keep his promise to tell Helen Alden of his failure, then see what could be done.

IT WAS late when he reached the city, and he stopped on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Twenty-third Street to watch an after-theater crowd. At length there were on the cold wind-swept corner only three persons besides himself, and they seemed unconscious of his presence.

One was a bald and rotund commuter, with a smug, sensual face, and he, too, was going on his way. The other two were women, still young and pretty. One indeed was almost beautiful, with large dark eyes. Both were loose and lax of movement, their voices rather loud and hoarse.

Cantrell was still staring when they turned and saw him.

"Hello!" It was the dark-eyed one who called. "Come and tell us about it!" He raised his hat and would have passed on, but she broke away from her companion and came to him with a swift, free grace, laid a light hand on his arm and looked up at him boldly. Her dark eyes, with light hair and pale but mobile face, were singularly appealing.

"There's no mistake, Reginald!" she announced with burlesque hauteur. "Brother Bill wired us to meet you here." At the same time she beckoned her companion to join her.

"You are mistaken this time," said Cantrell bitterly. "I have no money—and I'm out of a job."

She righted her hat with disconcerting abruptness and looked into Cantrell's face keenly. Then she wrinkled her small nose: "Don't you care, kid. We are there with the oof in bales and barrels." After a quick look round and another of her lightning movements she waved in his face a roll of bills with at least one yellow-back.

"Come with sister, and help burn it!" she said aloud, then hurriedly, in a lower tone that her companion could not hear, she added: "Borrow some, if you need it, boy!"

Cantrell was enveloped in an air of alcohol and Parma violets, but in the slightly flushed face turned to his there was real kindness and clean liking. He smiled with smarting eyes, as he said:

"Thanks! I'm not as bad as that, but I'm up against it, just the same. Good night!" And he raised his hat again, this time with courtly grace.

"So that's it!" she said sharply. "I'm sorry,—but *you're all right, kid!*" she added earnestly. "Tell her so for me. And you'll quit winner, at that. So long!"

But before they turned the corner she turned once more to wave the yellow-backs gaily.

Now of course such disgusting people go straight to —— Anyway, *They* say so; and They ought to know, for Their lives are given to settle such questions for us, who haven't time to think it out. But, as a matter of actual fact, Cantrell was strangely heartened by this experience.

ON HIS way to Fifty-second Street he began to worry lest Helen Alden might have come to town to call on Mrs. Macintosh, found her out, and had to go back alone. Though it was highly improbable, it was this thought that made the trolley-car seem to crawl uptown. And on his way across to the launch-landing the

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same thought kept him straining his eyes ahead, while he shivered with cold and apprehension.

He had crossed Third Avenue when he stopped and brushed his hand across his eyes to dispel an illusion. Continuous thinking had summoned up her image—there just beyond the next street-light.

Still there? There was no mistaking the smooth swing of the hips and the proud poise of the head. The figure passed a lighted window, and the familiar graceful outlines came out clearly.

With his first eager bound forward, things began to happen with a smooth, treacherous swiftness. A small furtive figure with a stiff knee hopped from a basement just ahead of him and waved a signal with a pocket-light. From the dark street beyond the next lighted corner a closed motor with lights hooded, swung out and round in a half-circle to stop at the curb beside the girl. Out leaped two men with a large blanket between them, wrapped it tight round her from behind and swung her into the car with the same motion. They were in and off again, all with the horrid unnatural silence and quickness of a pantomime or a nightmare!

Like a nightmare too was the numb, incredulous spell under which he tried to cry out and made only a hoarse croak; then ran desperately while the sidewalk slipped back under his palsied feet.

The car was gaining—dwindling in the dark—the stiff-legged man hopped in front and tripped him; the sidewalk came up to meet him with a sulfurous crash of splintering lights. When he scrambled to his feet there was neither car nor man in sight.

CHAPTER XII

DAN WHEELER

WILD and bewildered, he stood on a lighted corner and looked up and down the empty avenue. Who had done this? What could he do? He had been warned by Wheeler that the police would be too slow—if not bought up. Ah, Wheeler! Why hadn't he remembered? Fool!

Tearing up the stairs of the elevated, he heard the train rumbling in the distance. The instant Wheeler's dangerous face had flashed before his bewildered mind, he had only one purpose—to reach the downtown saloon where the famous crook had told him to come in case of trouble. Also he recalled more clearly that he had been told to avoid the police, for they would have been "fixed."

In the roaring, rattling train, he knew he must hold himself under control and try not to think *what might be happening to her*, or he would be arrested as drunk or insane. Yet the blood would rush hot and bursting to his head, then, icy-tingling, to his fingertips, as he saw again and again a vision of a pure, sweet girl—struggling—in silence ——

"Plenty of room in front!" A tap on his shoulder. The face he turned on the guard caused that ironic gentleman to retire to the platform. But he saw sleepy passengers staring at him; suddenly conscious that he stood in the door, hatless and muddy, he sank into a corner seat. Instinctively he brushed at the mud on his knees and saw that his handkerchief had come away from his lips bloody.

It would do no good to bite more holes in his lips, nor would it make the train go faster to strain every muscle and drive his nails into the flesh of his palms. He made an attempt to relax, to watch from the window for the sign of the station he wanted. He *must* think of something else if he were to preserve his reason! If something happened to stop *him*, what would happen to her? He set his teeth and breathed regularly and slowly.

"Fourteenth Street!" Long stairs leading down to the bright street—it was down those very stairs that Wheeler had rolled, locked in a death-clinch with a police-officer, shooting him in the body as they rolled; then made his getaway safely. He recalled how, in telling it, Wheeler had put his arm round him to illustrate; he could see the strong white teeth clenched in blood-relish at the memory of how he had "let go up under his belt—five times!" It roused him to no disgust now. Wheeler was just the man for this job; no man of softer fiber could "get action quick enough," as he would say. What if he could not find him? The thought bathed him in a cold sweat.

But there it was at last—"Canal Street!"

He leaped to his feet and from the car. It was a relief to use his legs in the cold air, as he ran down the long stairs to the streets where corner-saloons still glared bold and cheerful. He read the name in white-

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enameled letters, and as he pushed the half-doors it occurred to him that time was when one sought redress of wrongs in the mansions of the great; now one went to the back room of a saloon downtown.

THE keen-eyed barkeep swept him with a cold glance and out of the corner of a sardonic mouth jerked: "In back dere! Wid de Boss!" as he flicked the foam off a brimming glass.

Through one door into a dim hallway—at the back another door swung heavily and smoothly—he was in a room richly furnished and filled with good cigar-smoke. Wheeler and two others sat playing poker at a table in the center. As Cantrell stopped and reeled with relief, Wheeler jumped to his feet, throwing his silk hat and frock coat into a corner:

"They've got her! Where?"

His crisp tense voice roused Cantrell: "Fifty-second—near Second Avenue—a motor-car and two men——"

"Did you see anybody—so you could tell him?" Climbing into a sweater with the smooth swiftness that marked all his motions, Wheeler now spoke through the folds of the wool.

"A man with a stiff leg gave the signal——"

"Ratty!"

Emerging from the sweater, Wheeler looked at one of the men as he said it. The man, a cherub with a smile that left his eyes icy blue, nodded slightly and rolled a cold cigar to the other corner of his mouth. Then he turned the blue eyes slowly to the third man, who wore a leather cap:

"Burke, get the car here at once! At the side door!"

Meanwhile, the great cracksman had got into a sack-coat and cap; now he took from a cupboard a long cloak and threw it over his chair; then, his greenish eyes dancing with suppressed energy, he spoke again to the cherub:

"It's the same old plant—Meriden at his old game!"

"Do you know where—Is she in danger? For God's sake——" Cantrell broke out, shaking with anxiety.

Wheeler interrupted: "Easy! *As* she runs, old man!" patting him comfortingly on the back. "She's all right! We'll get her! Con,"—he turned to the cherub—"tell the boy about it, while I 'phone to Corbin." And he stepped into a closed booth as he spoke, and shut the door.

Cantrell sank into a chair, weak with relief, and the cherub bestirred himself for the first time. Holding a glass to Cantrell's lips, he said: "It'll do you good!"

"Thanks!" He took a fiery swallow. "I am——"

"'Sall right, son. Now *this* is how Dan has it doped out: This —— Hurd person's got to be nothing but a —— for the Artist, Meriden. He wants to put one over on the girl; so he puts Meriden hep—tells him she hasn't any friends to make trouble, and such. This is Meriden's frame-up. They take her to a house, put her in a room and throw a scare into her. Meriden does a phony rescue, and takes her to his 'Playhouse.' If she doesn't fall for it, and makes a holler, he has a blackmail kicker to fall back on, y'see? Now, it's up to you and Sled to queer it, for he's in too strong for——"

Cantrell, lost in bewilderment at the lingo, was about to interrupt, when Wheeler stepped out of the booth in time to hear the last words. "How's that, Con?" Soft and purring, his words made Cantrell shiver. "How are you playin' 'em?" He came nearer the cherub, eyes narrowed.

It was easy to see that the fat man was no coward, but he was gray round the mouth now; his voice was sharp with terror:

"Wait, Dan! Hold on! You know I am——" A trembling hand went to his hip.

"That'll be all of that!" rapped out Wheeler, and the hand stopped. "You must be in your dotage, to try to pull a gun on *me!* When I had you covered from my pocket!"

"What do you want, Dan? I——"

"What do I want! Why, you ——, did I whine 'What do you want?' when I dropped Potter? Where would you be now, you fat slob, if I had fumbled for the tenth of a second? And you know I'd quit a ten-time winner if I'd passed you up! And me just done my bit for you! You have sworn a hundred times to square accounts. Now, —— you, make good!"

At the last words, in an instant the greenish eyes went bloodshot, the low voice rasped with a deathly hoarseness.

"I will, Dan! Honest to God, I only wanted to give you a chance to get out! Tell me what to do!"

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"I tell you"—Wheeler's face had become normal again—"this man is a friend of Corbin's. You know what I'd do for *him*——"

"Sure! Why didn't you say so? Tell me what you want."

"Go into that booth and fix the Rat!"

As the fat man shot into the booth, Wheeler said to Cantrell: "Did he tell you their plant?" as coolly as if discussing the weather.

"He used so many words I couldn't make out——" Cantrell began.

" —— his patter! He was trying to be too fly—thought I was trying to play both ends against the middle, and wanted to be safe." This with a grim smile. "But this is the way it goes——" Wheeler lighted a cigar and sat down coolly.

"But how do we know she is safe now?" Cantrell jumped to his feet.

"Steady!" Wheeler waved him to his chair. "To rush the game will only land her in the police-station. I promise you we'll be there when the barrier drops, and no also-ran at that! Ask anybody if Sled Wheeler needs the whip!"

Cantrell sat down.

"I beg your pardon!"

"They have taken her to a house that I have had watched for several weeks past. Just about now they are 'phoning to Meriden that the game is on. When he is ready, with his car outside, and one or two helpers, a man is to go into the room where she is—made up as a drunk. She screams—Meriden to the rescue—stage get-away—he takes her to his 'play-house' and introduces her to his 'mother.' The rest of it we'll cut out, because it won't happen. But you see he's got her dead to rights, if she *doesn't* fall for it. He can have her run in, as an inmate of the place where he found her—with witnesses; officer and magistrate fixed; to say nothing of the yellow papers—you can see her finish! His mistake is in believing Hurd — that she hasn't any friends! But it's up to us to get her without bringing the cops down on us, or it will be an exceedingly bad mess all round."

Cantrell was on his feet again, and now the fat man came out of the booth: "The Rat will let you in. Meriden is due there in fifteen minutes. What is your dope now?"

"My friend to go into the room in place of the fake drunk; and go to the Artist while I do Eliza-on-the-ice with the girl. See anything better?"

The cold blue eyes of the cherub appraised Cantrell: "Spill a little fire-water on his tie, and he's fair pale-face drunk as he stands." Emptying a glass from the table on Cantrell's shirt, he pulled his cravat awry and gave his hair an extra rumple. "Now he's a pippin! But the Artist's a big brute, and some scrapper himself! What d'you know——"

"I'll back my friend to take him apart with his hands to-night! Besides, all he has to do is to keep him busy while I get the girl out through the concert-hall."

"Listens good. But Dan! Where do I get off if I'm broke for this?"

"I'll stake you to a job in my place in Philly—same old trick!" Wheeler was relighting his cigar with one hand; with the other he made a twirling movement as if rolling a roulette-ball.

"You're no piker, Dan!" said the other gratefully. "The car is ready!"

"Then come on, Doc! Hep up!" Throwing the cloak over his arm, Wheeler led the way out of the side-entrance.

CHAPTER XIII

RUN TO EARTH

IT HAD not been five minutes since Cantrell had entered at the front door, but it seemed hours; and as they rolled swiftly and noiselessly up the Bowery he could not control another wild spasm of alarm. He clenched his hands between his knees and muttered: "If something *should* go wrong!"

Wheeler was watching him, and now leaned forward so that his amber-green eyes gleamed into the younger man's.

"Listen, son!" he said heavily. "Do I do what I promise?"

Cantrell nodded and swallowed.

"Then understand I am in this to a finish. You don't know—any more than that girl—that I owe her my life. Now I tell you that she will come out of that place as good as she went in—if I have to *croak every soul in that house*—and sit in the chair!"

Cantrell felt the green eyes burning into his with an effect strangely benumbing; then looked down at the white shapely hand

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resting on his knee like a steel fixture. He remembered what Riley, the keeper, had said: "That soft woman's-hand has bumped off ten or a dozen as bad men as this country ever raised." As he looked at it with a sort of charmed shrinking, the hand turned palm up. and he placed his own in it for a painful grip.

The car slid smoothly through light and shade under the elevated; then out where the street broadened, dodging in and out; swung into Fourteenth Street, and stopped before a gorgeously lighted front.

From within, through the open door, sounded the braying of an orchestrion, and as they entered they were met by a gust of air that reeked with beer, wines and perfumes. Through the bar, where glasses clinked and waiters called orders, they went up a few steps, parted some heavy curtains and stepped into a large concert-hall filled with tables at which sat many women, drinking with men, or trying to entice men to drink with them. Following his guide between the tables, it was to Cantrell as cheerful as the wails of the damned, the last scene but one in the comedy of the Fallen! He reached out for Wheeler's shoulder:

"Was she dragged through this?"

"No. Entrance on next street. But she comes out through here, wrapped in this." He held up the cloak.

At the back of the hall was a curtained recess from which a small door let them into a dim passageway. When they reached the far end, Wheeler paused under a low gas-jet before another door: "That is the rear door of the house. I am going in to gag and bind the Rat, so as to square him with his gang. When I've got him out of the way, I'll call you in and show you the room where they have put her. You go in and tell her to holler for help—that's the Artist's cue. You get behind the door, and when he jumps in you climb him from behind! Jam your thumbs down inside the clavicle, for the pneumogastric—you know! Anyhow, keep him busy while I get her out through this way. You'll be batted on the head and run in, but it's the only way to keep her out of the mess; and Corbin will be at the station to get you out. There's one other way—but Meriden could drag her into police-court. What do you say?"

"Just let me at him!"

Wheeler took one look at the light in the gray eyes, at the working hands, and muttering, "Can you beat it?" let himself in noiselessly.

After a few long minutes he again opened the door and drew Cantrell inside. They stood in a richly furnished hallway, in the obscurity under the stairs.

"She's in that first room on the right. See that door beyond?" It was the door to the front room, and through the open transom came the notes of a piano and mingled voices. "There's a bunch in there, and if they—any of them—hear us, it means the girl to the station-house. So watch that door, and get in the other room quietly."

"Yes, yes!" Cantrell pulled away impatiently.

"Wait!" Wheeler held him firmly. "If anything happens, watch me! If you see me reach for this side-pocket, pick up the girl and beat it! I'll shoot up the house, and if I'm pinched, *you never saw me!* Now go on!"

AS CANTRELL stepped out into the light, he watched the door of the front room, where some one sang Schubert's "Serenade," and prayed that it would not open. But such luck was not to be. Halfway across the hall he saw the knob turn, the door open—and out stepped a slender girl in crimson. As she closed the door and faced him, he saw the dark eyes and light hair—the girl of the street-corner!

"Throttle her! Before she peeps!" came with a growled curse from Wheeler under the stairs.

But the girl took in Cantrell's disorder, came close and looked keenly in his face. Satisfied that he was not drunk, she said eagerly:

"What's the matter, kid? I've been thinking of you."

Then she saw Wheeler creeping toward her, his green eyes merciless, and shrank against Cantrell for protection.

"Break away, or we're done!" the great crook whispered, and his gaze never wavered from the woman.

"Don't hurt her, Dan! She's a woman!"

Cantrell's voice, raised in apprehension, rang through the hall. For a second they stood listening, hearing only the great "Serenade;" no one of them heard quick steps in the rear room.

The girl in red raised her face to Cantrell with a bird-like movement: "Kiss me

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once, kid! It won't hurt *you*, and——"

Wheeler was watching her with a strange, grim smile. As Cantrell bent and kissed her brow, the door of the rear room opened close at hand, and in it stood Helen Alden!

She had hurried to Cantrell's voice. Now the hope in her eyes died. Covering her face with her hand, she swayed against the door-post with a low moan, unheard through the notes of the music still filling the hall. And just then the front door opened, the door from the street.

Wheeler growled another curse: "Meriden! —— !" and reached for the side-pocket.

"*Wait!*"

It was the girl in crimson, who had taken in the situation with quick, shifting glances. From Helen Alden, now reaching out again to Cantrell, she looked to him and whispered: "Is that the one?" His face was the answer.

She caught the cloak from Wheeler, threw it round Helen Alden, and pushed her toward Cantrell: "Take her out through the passage!" Then to Wheeler, flinging an arm toward the huge brute in the front door, who was now calling to his men outside, she whispered:

"*Now* go to him!"

As Cantrell swept his precious burden into his arms he saw the girl in crimson meet the rush of the big hairy man and saw the flash of steel. Then Wheeler leaped like a panther, white hands flashing at the base of the hairy throat, and the struggling forms toppled through the door and down the front steps. He saw the crimson figure reel to the door and close it; and he started toward the rear passage with his precious burden.

"Wait! She is wounded!" Helen Alden tried to get down to go to the girl in red, but the latter turned to them a face that laughed through a chalky pallor:

"No! No! It's only a scratch! *Beat it—quick!*"

And this time Cantrell bore Helen Alden away in spite of protests. His last backward look showed him the girl in red swaying weakly, clinging to the doorknob with one hand, while one finger of the other was pressed to her white lips in a signal for silence.

The door closed behind him. If he had waited a moment longer, he would have seen the swaying figure collapse into a pitiful little heap—would have heard a faint attempt to say, "Now I lay me—" then a sobbing moan, a strangling, gushing cough; and then the heap lay still and the crimson spread upon the carpet, while the hall was silent save for the last sweet slumberous notes of the "Serenade."

CHAPTER XIV

DAN WHEELER "TELLS"

A MAN bearing a wrapped figure was not uncommon enough to excite more than a glance of interest in the concert-hall. As he placed the girl in the tonneau, Cantrell gave Burke Mrs. Macintosh's address, and leaned back to drink in the cool, sweet air.

Now, more than ever, it seemed a swift, fevered dream. But opposite him was the graceful form, face hidden and shoulders gently heaving. He had the sense to let her sob out her relief undisturbed, though he longed to take her in the arms still warm with her weight.

Mrs. Macintosh was waiting at the door.

"Leave her to me!" she greeted him. "Dr. Corbin is waiting at the police-station."

CORBIN, nervously pacing the sidewalk under the red light, ran to meet the car.

"She's all right, of course? Where's Wheeler?"

"Rolling down the front steps with Meriden when I saw him last."

Corbin's face lost all tinge of color and his lips twitched. "Did Meriden have any men outside?"

"Yes, but I couldn't see——"

"Drive round there! *Quick!*" Corbin sharply called to Burke, as he climbed in. While the car swung round and started smoothly ahead, Cantrell noted that his companion's hands were clenched and that he sat crouched for a spring.

"What can we do?" asked the Southerner.

"I don't know!" with a snap of the teeth. "But if he's pinched they could cook up ten years on old charges—and he'd never live—God! I'd rather it was I!" Wide-eyed and tense, he stared ahead.

Cantrell suddenly felt guilty, desperate. "Let's each tackle an officer, as they take

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him to the station, and let Burke take Wheeler in the car and run for it!"

"You've hit it! You hear, Burke? If you get away, don't stop this side of Canada!"

"Yeah! But I'm not worrying about Wheeler, if there's only three of 'em. It'd take about six, an' —— good ones at that!"

"But this Meriden's something fancy himself—Hey! What the —— *Whoop-ee! Yip—yip!*"

Jumping up in the tonneau, Corbin swung his hat and pounded Cantrell on the back like a freshman at a football game. The car had just turned into the Avenue; and round the opposite corner a big roadster swooped on two wheels and skidded against the curb just ahead of them. In the driver's seat Wheeler waved a hand to them to follow.

"The dog-goned old pirate! No living man but Dan could get out of such a hole! Yell, you Rebel!" And he pounded Cantrell's hat over his eyes as he threw himself into the seat again.

"We'll all be pinched, if you don't simmer down," said Burke gruffly. And added with a broad grin, "What d'I *tell* you?"

Meanwhile he was having his hands full to keep the high-powered car in sight. At a murderous pace Wheeler finally swung into Fourteenth Street, stopped with a slide in front of Tammany Hall, and ran lightly back to be pulled in enthusiastically by Corbin.

"That's a good place to leave it." Wheeler was parrying the blows his young friend aimed indiscriminately at his person. "Sit *down*, you maniac!" He seated him with emphasis. "Anybody'd think it made some difference what happened to a crook! You'll *get* it in a minute!"

"Tell us about it!" Corbin panted weakly, regarding the crook with the eyes of affection.

"Not much to tell. The whole performance was dead slow—all but my last specialty; and you missed that." He smiled askance at Cantrell. "This Meriden's got a neck like a Hereford bull, and he's some ju-jitsu himself. So I was still feeling for my hold while we rolled down the steps—and his hired men so wild to get in on me that they were kicking each other. One lands in his stomach, and makes him fair bug-house; he gets up and clinches; they roll down the basement steps, making a noise like a dog-fight; I rap the third man one for luck; he hits his head on the step and goes to sleep. Then I take the car to Tammany Hall by way of Fifty-ninth Street and the Park—and there's where you butt in."

"What the —— you doin' up at Fifty-ninth? And when d'you learn to run a car?" Burke turned a red face to inquire, and rumbled hoarsely inside.

"Go up First Avenue, or we may meet somebody looking for me. I learn to run that car on the way uptown. I start her the first crack out the box, and the more things I push and pull, the more she jams the wind. So I just stuck to steering, and I did some fancy figures, I rise to remark! People are running yet, up Lexington, and there's a white-hot streak across Fifty-ninth; but I found the brake somewhere between Fifth and the river, or I wouldn't be here. I'd got the speed mania by then, though; and I did enjoy that trip down! I was the cute Clarence from College, all right—so bold and devilish! I sure did remind myself of Sled Wheeler. The old man isn't dead yet!"

Never had Cantrell seen the great crook in spirits, and all the way to Fifty-second Street and across to the landing he kept the younger men a-tiptoe. When they came to the top of the stairs that led down to the float, he suddenly turned grave. He said to Corbin,

"I want to tell this Virginia man something."

And Corbin went down the stairs. Wheeler led Cantrell away from the car, to the railing where they could see across the river to the Island. Corbin paced the float below in the dim light.

"Son!" The tone startled Cantrell and brought his eyes to the grim, merciless face. "We may not meet again, and I tell you now what you will do." There was something paralyzing in the cold, keen eyes. "I learned something to-night in that hall. Now I don't argue or persuade—I *tell* you, and you will do it! Before you rush off anywhere, you will go to that little girl over there and—*get—it—off—your—chest!*" A finger of steel was pressed over Cantrell's heart at the words, and he stood numb under the greenish gaze; he did not even want to move. "You'll forget it till the time comes—then you'll do it! Now!"

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The finger was gone. A great weight removed, Cantrell drew a long breath. There was Corbin pacing the float; across the river the huge gray prison bulked dim in the starlight. Beside him Wheeler rested his chin on his hands and stared across the river with him. He was speaking: "You have a way with women—and with men. You can get friends—and money—but the right woman comes only once! Good-by!"

Again he felt the benumbing eyes; then a steel grip—and a white hand waved once from a car that dwindled rapidly in the distance.

He went slowly down to Corbin on the float.

CHAPTER XV

A WOMAN'S WAYS

IT WAS two o'clock in the afternoon when Cantrell awoke in his little hospital room. His second waking thought was that it was for the last time. Then came the sickening certainty that he had to face a struggle with poverty, and alone.

For as the hours in the little white sterilizing-room had come to be the heart and essence of his day, so the white, graceful mistress of that domain had come to be the need of his heart and the gladness of his eyes. For him she had truly come to be the Goddess of Purity; his best thought and endeavor were futile if not to lay at her feet.

But he must not come to her empty-handed, a defeated weakling, a selfish, sordid beggar. Well might she look down upon him from heights of success and self-support. To confess his love, she herself had pointed out, was to complete his humiliation. Plainly she had told him from the first that she would gladly see him suffer.

Rapidly there passed in review before his unhappy, brooding gaze the visions of the many days when she had been simply a perfect companion; he could see the faint, sweet smile with which she honored him before the staff—the glances of envy cast his way by every man who witnessed. Then the fear and shrinking in her face when his eyes turned tell-tales: It meant, then, that all these months she had conquered her loathing with the one steadfast purpose of bringing him to his knees—a hopeless suppliant. To yield to his longing to throw himself at her feet would be to lose the last atom of her respect—to put himself beneath contempt.

On his table lay a note, no doubt left by Joe while he slept:

> Remember—sterilizing-room at three.
>
> H. A.

At least she would see him; yet it only meant that she exacted the last ounce of her pound of tortured flesh. Hurriedly he made ready, glad that he was to see her, hear her voice once more. Further hope he had none.

Passing through the female surgical ward, he thought the nurses greeted him with pity in their glances; but Camilla in her wheel-chair gave him an adoring smile; she would be well in the Fall.

All down the corridor his heart beat hard and harder. He dared not pause, and knocked at the closed door.

"Come in!"

Sweet and low, it brought a pang of longing; for he was not to hear it again. Surely he would suffer—enough to satisfy her.

As on that first day, she stood with uprolled sleeves, busy with cotton and gauzes. Never so sweet and fine as now, never so utterly to be desired!

He waited for the silent upsweep of the dark-lashed eyes. It did not come, and presently he said:

"I have come—and I have failed." It was easier than he had supposed.

"Are the examinations finished?" The tone was coldly formal.

"No. I failed on the physical; so I did not——"

"Physical! What was the matter?" The deep violet eyes swept him swiftly and dropped to her work.

"Only athlete's heart—but it throws me out for good. It was my last chance," he said evenly.

"I told you I should be glad of it."

Still she did not look at him. Was she sparing him? She dropped the gauze pad she had folded, and went to the window; stood with one hand resting on a chair-back, her clear profile against the light. Often he had seen her so, but never so radiantly alluring. Could she be so cruel——

"Glad! When I had *wanted*——" Al-

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most with a sob he caught himself before it was too late.

But the cool lips curled gently.

"*You*—had wanted——"

Slowly she turned to him, and her eyes were troubled when they rested in his. She seemed to draw him irresistibly; he moved toward her with no purpose—he knew not why. But he must not yield. Her sweet, steady gaze made him tremble.

Softly, like a child she spoke, and the curved lips quivered:

"*Did* you—want—something?"

A familiar numbness was lifted from him, and with a rush it came forth:

"Want—yes, I want *you!* My White Princess—I love you—I love you! I want you—*want* you until life is one pain of longing!"

She swayed a little toward the chair. He feared to see the shrinking fear in her face; now saw only a white hand resting on her breast. Like a man in a fever he murmured low: "No sweeter, purer place in heaven above—none more unattainable!"

But the quick breathing beneath that resting hand! What had he done? Unconsciously he dropped to his knees:

"Forgive me—my White One! I love you!"

"Ah-h-h!"

At the low whispered breath he took his hands from his face, looked up—to see lovely violet depths, revealing a tenderness intense to sadness—nearer, nearer still—she sank into the chair and with a grace of utter abandon and possession opened wide her arms—took his head in their cool velvet freshness, cradled it on her breast with a crooning murmur as old as the race itself:

"Ah-h-h-h—*I* have wanted it so—*wanted* it so! Dear lad—dear lad—you will never, never know!"

It was a low, sobbing happiness, too deep for words.

But the man could not feel it all at once. "But the fear—the shrinking in your eyes?" He drew away to look up timidly, hungrily.

With a low laugh she took his face in her hands:

"You dear, blind boy! Of course I was afraid I'd let you see it—afraid, when you set that cleft chin so grimly, that you'd never tell me—tell me!"

"That I love—love—*love* you! My Princess!"

"Ah, yes! Dear lad—never forget to say it often and often! I can never hear it enough. It was so *long* in coming! And I was *so* afraid I'd *never* take this old curly head in my arms and rumple it all the wrong way!"

One satin arm across his lips, one cool hand stroked his hair with a clinging, gentle caress that took the very strength from his limbs. "Words don't tell, my lad! But can't you feel it in my hands?"

Full faith at last flooded warm through him. And to her, too, the time had come for her to learn her glorious lesson—what it meant to rouse all the adoring love, the whole love and savage tenderness of a strong and unspoiled man.

FORTUNES, like misfortunes, come not singly. In real life, we have hinted, things happen with cumulative intensity, without regard for probability, justice, or the laws of moderation that make for beauty in life or art.

So it fell out that the lovers had not asked and answered all the old questions—ever ecstatically new—when Joe brought Cantrell a letter that had arrived by messenger. And in that little room Helen Alden read aloud the first of the many thousand letters she was destined to read addressed to Dr. Lee M. Cantrell.

Dear Boy:

Dan Wheeler has been here and told me some things that decided me to write you without delay.

For some time Dr. Bowers and I have had a pet plan of building a children's hospital in or near New York; and now we are ready. We offer you the position of Director and Resident Surgeon at a salary of five thousand, at first. The salary is large for a young man, but we want a good man and expect him to earn more. You would be worth more married, but that can be remedied.

If you think favorably of it, come to dinner tonight—alone—if you can't get anybody to come with you!

Yours very truly
MARGARET MACINTOSH.

P. S.—Your first duties, beginning next month, would be to spend a year or more abroad—studying orthopedics and visiting similar hospitals on the Continent. M. M.

CORBIN and Wheeler watched the big liner draw away from the dock, and when they could no longer make out the Cantrells waving hand or handkerchief, they walked away in silence.

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"And I don't believe either one of them suspected that you had a hand in bringing them together," said Corbin at length.

"She doesn't know I owed her anything, either." Wheeler's voice was a little lower, a little hoarser than usual, his face wearing the softened look caused by the sight of the young couple's happiness. "So let it go at that! I wouldn't take the bloom off—for the Bank of England! And speaking of that Bank, I'd take a run across on another boat, just to see how they enjoy their visit, only those mutts at Scotland Yard are due just about now to get a hunch that I had something to do with that big crib three years ago—to say nothing of croaking Jim Allen in the basement of the Bank Building that same night."

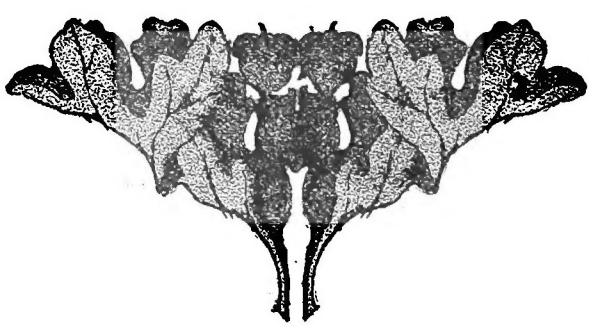
"I remember—the man who had fixed your gun and then tried to kill you and get away with the money." Corbin's gaze was fixed and absent. His pupils dilated at the recollection. Presently he broke out wonderingly: "Gee! What odds you have played against and won! And what a life to look back on!"

"You never can tell what the odds are against you," answered Wheeler. "Now this time I had another Dan—the naked blind boy—working with me; yet I'm not sure we'd have won, at that, if I hadn't doped one of our two opponents."

"How doped?" asked Corbin.

"You see we were up against a strong combination—New England Grit and Virginia Pride, and I'm not sure the man would have spoken yet if I hadn't read your psychology book in the Pen. I take off my hat to that man James. That night I talked to the Virginia man while you waited on the float I did a little amateur suggestion to put his pride to sleep. I do hate to be beaten!"

After an admiring pause, Corbin said: "I don't know how you can tell what the sensation would be!"



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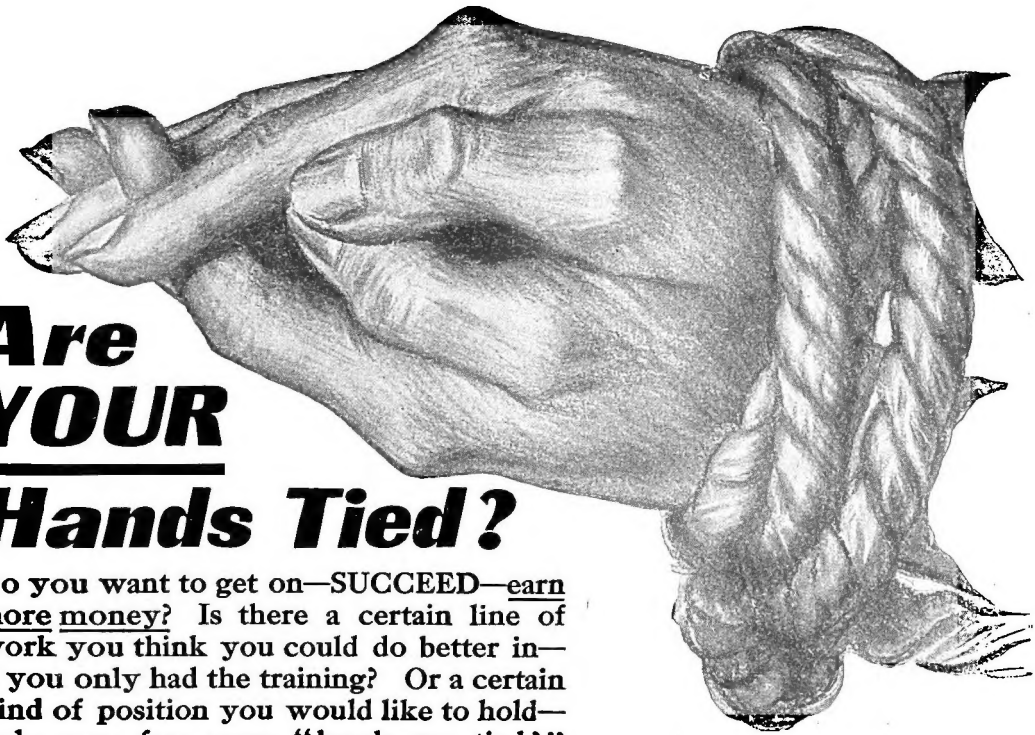

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